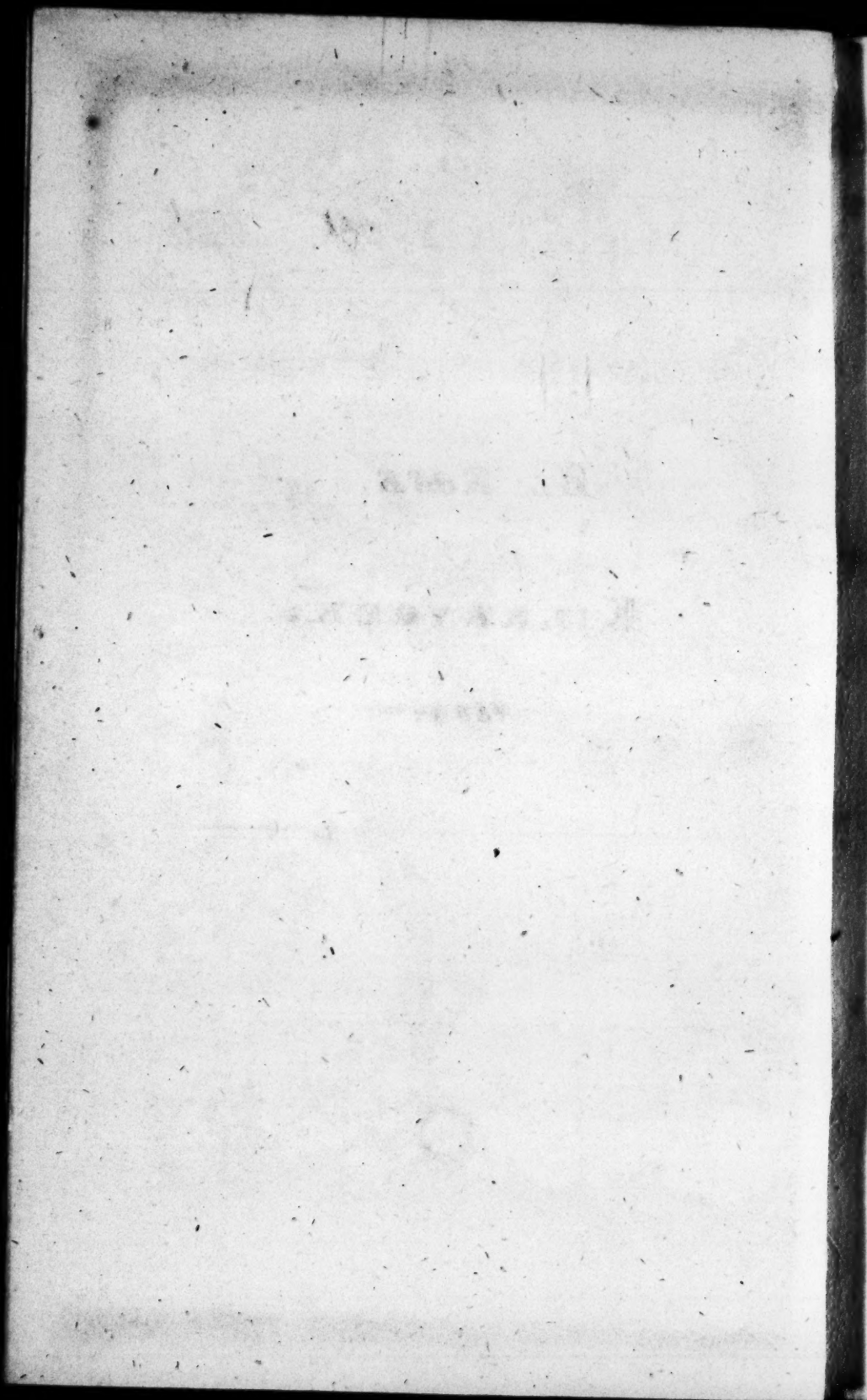


*EL. ROSE,*

**KILRAVOCK.**

*1804.*







*Frontispiece.*



*Corbould delin.*

*Barre sculp.*

THE  
FEMALE ADVOCATE;  
OR  
AN ATTEMPT TO RECOVER  
THE  
*RIGHTS OF WOMEN*  
FROM  
MALE USURPATION.

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BY MARY ANNE RADCLIFFE.

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The fairest of created works was made  
To share, with man, th' empire of creation,  
T' enjoy its comforts and its sweets, its pains  
And suff'rings. — ANON.

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London:

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1799.

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 cause.



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TO THE  
R E A D E R.

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SO various and complicated are the scenes of this life, that seven years have elapsed since the following pages were written, a period, perhaps, more favourable for publishing than the present; but timidity, or other hindrances have repeatedly prevented their appearing before the public; during which time the author hoped some more able advocate would have taken up the

A 2                      cause,



cause, to do justice to a subject of such importance to society at large, and particularly a much injured part thereof. For, alas! it is too well known, that female education, in general, is confined within very narrow limits, and seldom permitted to extend to classical accomplishments. The writer of this volume being a female, with only a female's education, is sufficiently aware of her inadequacy to the undertaking, but trusts the importance of the subject will claim some attention; at the same time, reposing a full confidence in the candour and unbounded goodness of some part of her readers at least, she is once more encouraged to resume the pen, to add, or amend such remarks as the nature of the times and circumstances require, and, at length, has so far surmounted her timidity, as to submit the following sheets, with all their imperfections,

perfections, to the inspection of a generous public, who are more ready to appreciate the works of individuals from the rectitude of intention, than the beauty of composition. The attempt, she must acknowledge, has cost her many a painful emotion; for a first attempt, surrounded by all the disadvantages peculiar to the sex, seems, to her, to require no small share of courage, and which, indeed, nothing but the importance of the subject should have induced her to encounter.

The subject of the following pages is an attempt to delineate the situation of those poor, helpless, females whose sufferings, from a variety of causes, are too grievous to be borne; the sources and dire consequences of which the exalted in life cannot form the least conception, unless they condescend to examine for themselves, when, it is to be hoped, their griev-

ances will be fought into and redressed. The munificence of the people of Great Britain, which is ever ready and adequate to the support, aid, and comfort, of the afflicted, when their troubles are fully investigated; and the great number of unfortunate women, who, doubtless, would rejoice to become virtuous and useful members of society, in some lawful employment, have encouraged the author to offer this feeble representation. Nor can she despair of eventual success to the cause she has engaged in, if she is but so happy as to excite the attention of those whose souls are enlarged with the exalted ideas of Christian charity.

Indeed, it is a work which, as a duty to our fellow creatures, she has long, very long, wished to see executed by a more able pen; but the silence of others, the liberality of a generous public, and a most ardent wish to see misery alleviated,

ated, and virtuous industry crowned with abundant success, have been the principal motives to her engaging in so arduous an undertaking. Conscious, however, that whatever good may be the result, the praise alone is due to the benevolent principles of humanity.

The author, at the same time, wishes it to be understood, that she has not been stimulated, from vain and ambitious views, to appear in print, but rather from the pure philanthropic motive of throwing in her humble mite towards the much-wished-for relief of these most pitiable objects of distress; numbers of whom, from the want of a fair representation of their case, she greatly fears, are unable to obtain shelter under the auspicious shade of Christian charity; and, consequently, are compelled to share the fate of the most wretched of human beings. She

wishes to represent the case of those who would be industrious, if they might, but are held down by the most powerful influence of custom and misrepresentation; and, consequently, are incapable, without the kind assistance of humanity, to find redress, or even again to tread the paths of virtue. But, alas! finding herself so feeble an advocate, she can only hold the pen of Truth, whilst Reason and Justice plead their cause.

*Kennington Cross,  
March 6th, 1799.*

INTRO-



# INTRODUCTION.

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"Say, first of God above, or man below,  
"What can we reason from, but what we know?"

POPE.

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**L**ET not the fair fame of this country be tarnished with an unnoticed appeal; in particular, an appeal of such magnitude as to involve, at once, the peace, the happiness, and the welfare of every individual. The author's design is by no means to contend for power, but protection for this oppressed people; imagining that to be the firmest basis on which to establish the happiness of both sexes.

It must be allowed, however, when custom has given permanency to any practice, however evil in its tendency, it is next to impossible to effect its removal, or to succeed in any reasonable claim; therefore I contend not  
with



with the lords of the creation, for any other privilege than that protection, which they themselves avow to be the *real rights of women*. I would not have it understood, that the generality of women, any more than men, are incapable of acquiring the same degree of knowledge and improvement in literature; and happy am I to learn, that this state of prohibition is not general; and that a classical education, in some parts, is not confined to men alone; for, if the author is not misinformed, it is upwards of seven years since there was an establishment formed in Philadelphia, where youth and innocence find protection from the guardian genius, Instruction, whose emblematical trophy may very well be formed of Knowledge gaining the victory over Ignorance.

But these advantages, in Britain, being monopolized by the male sex, permit me to ask, if it is not their duty, at least, to afford protection in their stead; for, surely, if they refuse to protect, they have no right whatever to govern.

“ Britons,

"Britons, attend! be worth like this approv'd,  
"And shew you have the virtue to be mov'd."

Therefore I am led to keep firmly to the assertion, that it is not power, but protection, which is required; for the generality of women, *natives of this country*, are so perfectly tamed, either through custom or compulsive submission, that, let but the lenient hand of protection be stretched out to their aid, and, doubtless, content and happiness will resume their seat, and cheerfulness form the leading feature, to bespeak the tranquillity of those souls, which have been so long depressed.

All women possess not the Amazonian spirit of a Wolstonecraft. But, indeed, unremitting oppression is sometimes a sufficient apology for their throwing off the gentle garb of a female, and assuming some more masculine appearance; yet, when the curtain of misrepresentation is once withdrawn, it is to be hoped, (not doubted) that the cause of complaint will quickly be removed,

It seems, however, very necessary to call in some able assistants, and consequently I  
make

make my appeal to reason, justice, and truth, which, in checking the spirit of malevolence, should it rear its hydra head to the prejudice of the cause, will also be the means of shielding the writer from the common censure which the narrow-minded, in general, bestow on a first production.

A serious statement of facts, it is to be hoped, will be productive of good to great numbers, who would be happy to relieve their fellow-creatures, but whose exalted situations in life too generally preclude them the opportunity of obtaining a knowledge of the real wants of the wretched, or the causes of their sufferings; by exhibiting, though feebly, a complicated picture of misery and distress.

Yet, it may not be amiss to observe, that having made my remarks chiefly on real, and not imaginary grievances, should any thing in these pages do violence to the critical abilities of any of my readers, whose superior education exalts them above the level of the inferior ranks of society, it is the writer's request, that the intention may be kept in remembrance.

Still,

Still, methinks, I hear the voice of reason reproaching me, after the many acknowledged disadvantages, for attempting to write on a subject of such weighty importance. Indeed, considering the great number of eminent writers that are daily displaying their erudition in a variety of subjects, and in styles so very far superior to my poor abilities, the undertaking were presumption itself. But, amidst the abundant shew of publications which are daily ushered into the world, I have not seen one on a subject similar to this. This alone is the exciting cause to my undertaking, in which it will be my utmost ambition to be the humble means of directing the tender eye of benevolence to worthy objects of commiseration; or, inducing some more able advocate to take up the cause of a much-injured and oppressed part of the community.

Doubtless, in their journey through life, a number of my fellow travellers have made the same observations with myself, though they have not made them public; yet, willing to suppose *that* silence did not proceed from a

want

want of those philanthropic dispositions which have, at all times, distinguished Britons, we will suppose this great omission, for undoubtedly great it will appear, when properly investigated, cannot possibly have been occasioned from any other cause than the force of custom, by which the greatest part of the community have been so long hoodwinked; and those grievances passed by in silence, of which I am about to speak. Many excellent charities this country supports, and many worthy individuals seem to exult in stepping forward to the aid of the distressed; nor is it to be doubted, that many more would as cheerfully contribute in support of the still unfortunate and oppressed, were they made acquainted with the real objects: but, alas! when keen adversity strikes its pointed dart into the bosom of the afflicted, the pain is too great to admit of an explanation; and when past, their only endeavour is to bury its remembrance in oblivion: therefore, unless some friendly hand take up the pen, how can those, who are enabled by fortune and prompted by compassion, stretch forth the hand of clemency to distressed, of which

they



which they never heard; or, like the good Samaritan, pour oil into wounds which they never saw. In the mean time, then, let mine be the painful, though voluntary, task; and even, should the design not immediately meet with the desired success, no doubt, but in a short time it may, by the kindly interference of the great, powerful, and humane investigators of human calamities, to the emancipation of this oppressed part of the human kind.

At the commencement of the Magdalen charity, it is true, an objection was started, which was founded upon this candid question: "What will you do with such poor creatures, when you have them?" But the difficulty was as soon solved by Robert Dingley, Esq. the first humane proposer of the charity. Nor is there a doubt, were a similar enquiry to take place, it would as soon be solved; for what undertaking is too bold for man to attempt, when a restoration of happiness to his fellow creatures is the object. I shall, then, cheerfully proceed to offer the following general hints, which, it is hoped, will be improved upon to the good of society.

THE



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THE  
FEMALE ADVOCATE.

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PART FIRST.

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF MEN  
TRADERS ENGROSSING WOMEN'S  
OCCUPATIONS.

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TO detail human misery in all its various shapes is not in the power of any individual : so complicated and numerous are the ills of this life, and so various its misfortunes, that we need not have recourse to the airy regions of fiction or romance, to find out objects of distress, to pourtray the woes of our fellow creatures ; yet, from motives of delicacy,

B beg

beg leave to withhold names, lest the suffering objects should feel hurt at the melancholy recital of their tale of woe; and shall therefore only select a few instances, and leave the candid moralist to take a comparative view of the rest, through all the wonderful mazes and wide tracts, to which a part of our fellow mortals have been condemned.— And by what? not by divine law, which is, or ought to be, the standing rule of all our actions, but by an evil precedent, which happens to fall with all its force upon that part of the community, whose feeble powers of resistance, joined to an habitual passive submission, are the least able to defend them. Consequently it has never yet been thought a business worth investigation, although so many others, of much less moment, have been sought out, and redressed.

When we look around us, nothing is more conspicuous in the eyes of the world, than the distresses of women. I do not say those whom a kind Providence hath placed under the immediate care of a tender father, or an affectionate and kind husband; or, *by chance*,  
a friend,



a friend, or brother. But these, alas! comprise only one part of the community. Notwithstanding all are of the same nature, and were formed by the same Divine Power, yet their comforts differ very widely indeed. Still, as women seem formed by nature to seek protection from man, why, in the name of justice, refuse the boon? Does it not become highly worthy the attention of men in general, to consider in what manner to redress the grievances *already within their notice?*

Perhaps it may be said, and very justly, that, considering human frailty, there is amongst women, as well as men, a vast number of vicious and undeserving. Granted; still, is it not better to pass over a hundred guilty, than let punishment fall upon one innocent person?—Besides, IS THERE NOT A POSSIBILITY OF FORMING A PLAN OF DISCRIMINATION, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE ONLY WHO MERIT SUCH HUMANE AND FRIENDLY INTERFERENCE?

Some years ago, who would have been made believe, so many persons could be restored to life, as the Royal Humane Society,



for the recovering of drowned persons, has effected? Yet so it is; which proves to a demonstration, the practicability of this design. But before I proceed with my Hint for erecting any established plan, for the restoration of peace and happiness to the, perhaps, once happy, but now most miserable of beings, I cannot help making a remark, that, in order to lay a good foundation, every builder must find it necessary, first, to remove the rubbish out of his way—So let us proceed to the ground-work of the design; and, before any further steps are taken, ask, What can be said in favour of men-milliners, men-mantua-makers, and men-stay-makers? besides all the numerous train of other professions, such as hair-dressers, &c. &c.; all of which occupations are much more calculated for women than men. But, thanks to the fashions of the times, for once, which have nearly exploded that disgraceful custom of men dressing ladies' hair, by the introduction of all the brutuses and chignons, of every denomination, which have found their way to the toilets of all descriptions of females.—

Where

Where is there a Stevens now? was there ever a wider field for the display of his talents? Yet, if perukes are the fashion of the day, what is to prevent a woman from displaying her taste upon a lady's head as well as a man, who seems much better calculated for a more masculine employment.

"Look," says an observer, "to the shops of perfumers, toymen, and others of a similar occupation; and, above all, look to the haberdashery magazines, where from ten to twenty fellows, six feet high, may be counted in each, to the utter exclusion of poor females, who could sell a tooth-pick, or a few ribbons, just as well."

A tax upon these fellows would be very salutary, so say I; yet, for a poor female individual to attack so numerous a body of men, however insignificant by custom, is a bold stroke, no doubt; yet, having thrown these sentiments together, in defence of the oppressed, even the censure of malevolence itself *will* not prevent the truth, which, like a huntsman's whip, cannot give pain to any *but* those it touches: for, as no rule can be established

without exceptions, so in this case more than one must be granted, which shall be treated of in a subsequent part of these pages. To class the innocent with the guilty would be doing injustice to the cause.

But, in the mean time, where are these fathers, husbands, brothers, and professed friends to virtue and happiness, who step not forward in the business? No doubt but there are many men of great probity and humanity, and yet, through the progressive course of custom, have not adverted *either* to the cause or its fatal consequences; or, in fine, are not aware of the real distresses of our fellow-creatures; from which idea it is so frequently wished a reference to facts may take place, since neither the sufferings of these poor women, nor the cause of their sufferings can possibly be known, but by investigation.

It is not to be supposed but all, in some degree, share the common misfortunes in life; and few there are, however wretched their situations, who cannot single out other beings as bad, if not in a more deplorable state.

But

But, in the case of these poor women, where is there a state nearly equal to theirs? borne down by fate's afflicting hand, they are not able to act, or seek redress; and this, by the unfeeling part of the world, we have too great reason to fear, is termed idleness and profligacy.

What a littleness of mind! what an unfeeling and despicable meanness must lurk in the breasts of those, who can, with impunity, insult over distress! Into what fits of desperation have numbers of helpless females fallen through these contemptible insults and revilings, and even neglects! for, it is in those dark moments of distress, when the senses are all alive to the fine feelings of nature, that every nerve is relaxed and ready to receive the fatal dart.

Then indeed it is, that she stands exposed in the field of adversity, surrounded by every disadvantage, without the aid of education, or the guardian hand of protection; that is to say, without either weapon or shield of defence: a situation which, it is natural to suppose, would draw pity from the most obdurate hearts. Yet,

how many are the instances of the censorious part of the creation, dastardly and cruelly assassinating and murdering the character of these poor unfortunate victims, and those of all murderers are the worst under heaven. The common and detected murderer stands exposed to the laws of his country, but the assassin, who, under a cloak of hypocrisy, can persecute and defame the characters of oppressed females, are no longer worthy the invaluable title of Christian.

Then, pass no longer, so unconcernedly and without notice, the distressed and wretched situation of the most helpless part of the creation, who are not impowered by any means whatever to defend themselves; having, by the strong power of custom, so long been deemed unworthy of notice.

O! may that auspicious day arrive, when the curtain may be withdrawn, and the tragic scene exposed to open view; when every true Briton who reveres his Maker, or his king, may cheerfully exert himself in the general cause.

What



What greater satisfaction can the good heart feel, than to be the instrument of drawing distress from the dark shades of obscurity and wretchedness? In addition to which, are we not fully convinced, from the words of our blessed Teacher, that a kind and charitable disposition towards our fellow-creatures, is one of the greatest precepts of our religion? Does he not say, by this the world shall know you to be my disciples, if you love one another. Then, on the strength of divine exhortation, let us comfort these poor women in the words of the immortal Milton:

“Be not disheartened then, nor cloud those looks,

“That wont to be more cheerful and serene.”

But with joyful expectation wait a relief to those trying hardships which the unfortunate part of poor females have so long sustained; not doubting but some friendly and humane well-wisher to the distressed, *and the public in general*, will zealously undertake the cause, whether individually, or in general, matters not; for it is not to be supposed, all men are in the same mind at once, or can obtain a full knowledge

ledge of the case at first view ; but when once begun, doubtless others will as quickly join in the grand cause, and from a serious survey, discover some mode of regulating this complex business, which carries such a vast train of grievances after it, and which is deeply interwoven with the happiness of the greatest part of the people, connected with the whole, will manifest itself to every serious enquirer, and shall be more fully enlarged upon, as we explore the dreary scene. But I can never force myself to a belief, that woman, the mother of all mankind, was ever intended by Divine Providence to become a butt, or mark, to receive so many piercing darts from the sons of her bosom, as her only reward for all that maternal affection and kindness which the helpless state of infancy and childhood render so necessary : independently, does it not seem a social interest in nature, to give aid and succour to one another ?

No: it was never intended that women should be left destitute in the world, without the common necessaries of life, which they

so frequently experience, even without any lawful or reputable means of acquiring them, through the vile practice of men filling such situations as seem calculated, not only to give bread to poor females, but thereby to enable them to tread the paths of virtue, and render them useful members, in some lawful employment, as well as ornaments to their professions and sex. This lovely appearance, alas! is but too often thrown aside, and, frequently, *not* from vicious inclinations, but the absolute necessity of bartering their virtue for bread.

Then, is it not highly worthy the attention of men, men who profess moral virtue and the strictest sense of *honour*, to consider in what mode to redress these grievances! for women were ultimately designed for something better, though they have so long fared otherwise.

That there should be a mixture of characters in the world is, beyond a doubt, for wise and good reasons, which we poor short-sighted mortals know not, more than that it is a principle in which all reflecting persons have agreed, that

that our present state, on this side the grave, is certainly designed for improvement, in order to fit us for a better. This being admitted, where can the well-disposed find a better opportunity, than by defending the innocent and unprotected, selecting them from the noxious part of mankind, with whom they are, through keen adversity, obliged to associate; and placing them in such situations, as will enable them, to pursue the paths of virtue, by means of some honest employment?

But to accomplish so laudable a design rests both with the humane and the opulent, by whose investigation, there is not a doubt, but it will be found a work of the utmost importance, not only in the present state of things, but in looking forward to a succession. For in times like the present, is not the aid and assistance of men required in the military and naval departments? And in more peaceable times, which we have to look forward to, are not, or ought not, the manufactories of the country to be the first object considered? In either of these cases, it evidently  
appears,

appears, that men may be much better employed than in filling women's occupations. For, in the words of St. Luke, these poor females may very justly say, "to dig I cannot, to beg I am ashamed." From this evil precedent, there is no other alternative for these poor women, but beggary or vice!

Let us then, if you please, select one of these distressed females, out of the prodigious multitude, and pursue her through the humiliating scene of beggary: I believe it is granted, that pride is well known to be the predominant passion of the human breast, and consequently any comments on that head are needless; but certain it must be, that after, perhaps, a life of ease and affluence, to be compelled to such a mortifying situation, requires more than a common share of fortitude to support. Still this prevailing passion, with all its train of attendants, must be subdued, in the dreadful situation of beggary which cannot fail to bring down the spirits of these unhappy victims, with more oppressive force than it is in the power of words to express, or pen to paint, and can  
only



only be conceived, *in part*, by the silent sensations of those who can adopt another's woes, and trace the passions of the human mind. For what must not be the perturbation of a mind like this, when dire necessity compels the poor, neglected victim to pursue such degrading steps, in order to support a miserable existence! See her trembling limbs, which are scarcely able to support her load of wretchedness, whilst she asks an alms from the casual passenger. She who, perhaps, a short time since, charmed her acquaintance with her sprightly conversation and virtuous example, by one adverse stroke, is nevertheless so soon become the contempt, the scorn, and the outcast of mortals! Nor is this wretched doom confined to youth alone; but, by the cruel hand of fate, the poor, dejected mother, as well as daughter, is condemned to share the same direful misfortunes, and be reduced to the same low state of wretchedness, from which their characters are stigmatized with infamy, and to which they unavoidably fall a sacrifice. In this miserable state they

they must for ever remain, until the spirit of oppression and mistaken prejudice is eradicated, and the heavy cloud of misrepresentation cleared away, through a proper investigation of the cause, which, doubtless, will lead to a conviction; that the distress and wretchedness of these poor, abandoned creatures originate chiefly from the avaricious and mercenary views of that set of beings, who are "Eating the bread of the hungry, and drinking the drink of the thirsty." Nor are these poor women allowed "to pick up the crumbs," which will appear in the sequel.

In the mean time, let us, if you please, take another view of this poor mother and her miserable daughter, in this forlorn and distressing state of beggary, and there see what relief they obtain, from their piercing accents and broken sighs—little more, it is to be feared, than contempt or insults. Even the hand of charity, accustomed to bestow on the needy, no sooner observes the appearance of youth, or a capability of industry, than it is instantly withdrawn,

withdrawn, and kept in reserve (as it is thought) for some more proper object.

Good heavens, what a scene of woe ! when the poor mother and her helpless daughter are turned adrift, to the mercy of an unfeeling world ; which neither their genteel education, or delicate constitutions, broken down by poverty and hardships, can prevent. O ! what distress, in a situation like this ! The mother, the fond mother, in the full bitterness of maternal affection, takes another, and another view of her darling child ; perhaps the only remaining pledge of a late kind partner ! sees her still laden with the fruits of a pious education at least ; views her with unutterable fondness, “ whilst all the soft passions of her tender soul throb through her breast with unavailing grief,” at the near approach of their destruction ! In vain do they supplicate their former friends, for the voice of censure has pointed them out as infamous ! Good God ! what grief can equal this ? Abandoned by friends, and left to the reproach, contempt, and censure of a cruel world, without

without a provision, or any probable means of gaining a subsistence, or even the smallest glimpse of distant hope.

And, though shocking to relate, yet such is the miserable situation of thousands of defenceless women.

Nor let the unfeeling and censorious part of mankind refute the assertion, until provision is made for the relief of all those who would be both industrious and virtuous, had they the means. After which, the remaining few may justly be reckoned in the class of incorrigible sinners, and be a sufficient mode of forming a discrimination.

But until that provision is made, it is inhuman, base, and cruel, and beneath the dignity of a Christian, to load with infamy the poor, neglected female, who suffers through misfortunes, and the continuation of an evil precedent; and whose passive virtue is, perhaps, at the very instant of calumny, offering up the divine petition of, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do;" and endeavouring to arm with Christian fortitude herself and beloved child, according to the  
c advice

advice of the wise man, who says, "Hast thou children, instruct them from their youth." She remonstrates with the child of her bosom, notwithstanding she is her partner in wretchedness, and still encourages her to persevere in virtue, and live in joyful hope.

"Let us, my dear child," says she, "form our estimation of the world and its objects as they deserve; remembering we are pilgrims and strangers here. Let us keep in view the glorious prize; and let us soar above the crowd of human difficulties, and rejoice that the hand which made us is divine. Then, let not our feet tread in the muddy paths of vice, nor suffer the purity of our good intentions to be stained with a single act of disobedience to a Supreme Power."

And under these and such like reviving comforts, the effects of a religious and pious education, she still endeavours to persevere in virtue, though in the midst of poverty; a state which, without the interference of the humane, not any thing can hide them from but the silent grave. Oh! let not then our ears be polluted by the envenomed breath of cen-  
sure,



sure, but endeavour to remove the cause, as well as stigma, which, like the pendulum to a clock, sets every wheel of wretchedness in motion; and by seriously investigating the cause, searching deeply into the state of facts, and the origin of this tribulation, let the censure rest where it is due. For, is it not enough, enough indeed! for the innocent to struggle with the hardships of penury and want, without the double load of malevolence? Alas! even in this despicable state, they are still liable to sorrows they never yet felt, nor are even aware of; for the very means they are driven to use, to obtain the trifling pittance which they sue for, renders them exposed to the merciless hand of any avaricious ruffian, who may be base enough to drag these poor victims they know not where.

What says the Vagrant Act?—"Persons who beg in the streets are idle and disorderly; and any person who apprehends and carries such a beggar before a justice, shall receive five shillings, when the said justice may commit them to a house of correction."

However shocking the sentence, what numbers of these poor objects have been dragged away by the ruthless hand of the unfeeling savage, to some loathsome prison, without regard to the more refined or delicate sensations of one or another? Good heavens! there surely needs no Siddonian powers to heighten such a tragic scene. She who, perhaps, was reared with all the gentle softness and maternal care of a fond parent; she, who so lately was looked upon as an ornament to her sex, until the pressure of misfortunes compelled her to seek for bread, to be at once confined in a dark prison, there to be obliged to hear all the opprobrious language of the very lowest set of beings, and that under a storm of oaths and imprecations, which, of itself, must pierce her very soul. There to have her ears grated with the rattling of bolts and bars, and all the adamantine fetters of misery. Good God! is it possible we can see our fellow creatures debased so low! Can we see the tender and delicate frame, which was formerly accustomed to ease and tranquillity, and which

was

was formed by nature to participate in others misfortunes ! can we let these innocent and helpless beings pass unnoticed, and not commiserate their distress, and ask, from whence the cause ?—No ! it is impossible the eyes can any longer be shut to their sufferings, or the ears to their piercing cries of, “ Have pity on me ! Oh ! ye, my friends, have pity on me ! ”

Is not this real distress ? Surely there cannot be any thing more wretchedly miserable than the situation of these poor women, who are prohibited from sharing in industry, or the common necessities of life, or even tasting the very dregs of comfort. For let us but figure to ourselves this wretched pair upon their bed of straw, with all their innocence, with all their tenderness, and quick sensations of distress, still laden with the fruits of a pious education,

“ They shriek, start up, the same sad prospect find,

“ And wake to all the ills they left behind.”

And thus they linger out a wretched exile in this miserable dungeon, until the law hath had its course, and they again are liberated.

When see, the fond mother, the poor mother, taking another, and another review of her wretched offspring, groaning out a miserable existence on the narrow verge of life! her sorrow surrounds her like the stern winter's blast, and she feels her worn-out senses just bordering upon desponding madness; for, when Hope no longer offers her consolation, despondency must take place; and with all the bitter pangs of distress, she, like the poor widow in sacred writ, sets about to prepare her last handful of meal, that "they may eat it and die." A release they most ardently wish for, whilst in a state of innocence, rather than keep life upon such wretched terms as are now presented: for, alas! by this time, they see that period near at hand, which must determine the great and shocking alternative between vice or death. And what must be the conflict at this long-dreaded moment, to a heart which, in early youth, was taught to serve its great Creator, and still retains an ardent wish to be virtuous! Can any state under heaven be more distressing to a delicate and susceptible mind, than that between good and evil?

evil? And, how shocking it must be, at length, to hear these poor victims of wretchedness, defend themselves, by exclaiming, "I sought not redress in vice, till urged to it by self-defence, in order to support an existence, which, though I no longer covet, it is my duty to preserve: nor is there any other remedy for ills like mine; for, as the wise Solomon says, "extreme oppression maketh us desperate!"

What a horrid and shocking state! to be driven, by absolute necessity, to support a wretched existence by the forfeiture of every thing she holds most dear in this life, and at the hazard of what is still more precious, her immortal soul!

Besides, what must not be the agonies of her soul in this wretched state, on the dreadful approach of death? a death which, though so much desired in innocence, is dreaded with so great horror in guilt, when all her crimes appear at once to her distracted view. Worn out with intemperance and disease, she feels the dreadful period near at hand, when she must appear before the grand tribunal!



How many are her penitential tears in such a horrid situation? She calls, and calls again, upon her great Creator, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy fury, nor chastise me in thy wrath; for who can stand before the face of thy indignation?" And thus surrounded with all these dismal and heart-piercing sensations, without a friend to comfort, or the still more invaluable consolations of a dying Christian; her every sense is racked with horror, and little unlike the infernal regions is her wretched situation.

Whilst her associates in vice are revelling in drunkenness, in order to banish from their reflections all ideas of the horrid scene, and thus she lies, "Groaning out the poor remains of life," her limbs bathed in sweat, and struggling with convulsive throws, pains insupportable throbbing in every pulse, and innumerable darts of agony transfixing her conscience.

"In that dread moment, how the frantic soul

"Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,

"Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,

"But shrieks in vain. How wishfully she looks

"On

"On all she's leaving, now no longer her's."

"A little longer, yet a little longer."

Thus her exhausted breath expires, and she dies in all the bitterness of woe. And this alike must continue to be the fate (as it has been so long to numbers) of both parents and children, unless the kind hand of interference shall sever the chain of misery, by which they have so long been held down.

But will not a serious investigation into these scenes of horror be sufficient to arouse the most callous of mankind? for who would not use their utmost endeavours to relieve such unheard-of distress? Or, what is still better, prevent such dire calamities, and all such complicated scenes of misery and wretchedness: for, is it not always granted, that prevention is better than cure?

Then let it not be said, that a country so famed for its justice and humanity, should suffer a continuance of such distress; or that any of our fellow creatures should be compelled to take shelter under the baneful shades of vice, in order to support a miserable existence.

Much,

Much, *very much*, indeed, may be said on this subject, but it is not my wish or intention to delineate; or dwell longer upon the tragical history, than may serve to lead to the avenue of investigation; when a small part of these striking truths, to a reflecting mind, will be sufficient to conciliate, and cause them to exert a cheerful readiness to serve our fellow-creatures; by doing which we are well assured it is performing a three-fold duty, viz. to God, to our neighbour, and ourselves. I am fully persuaded, it will appear equally as political as humane; for the poor, miserable, and oppressed creatures cannot say with *Job*, "I have erred, mine error remains with myself." No: their crimes are contagious, and their errors extend and spread their baneful influence through cities, towns, and whole countries, to the utter destruction of families of all descriptions; in which case, is it possible unwary youth should escape?

What numbers of unguarded young men, even with hearts inclined to virtue, have unhappily been drawn on to vice, by the powerful insinuations of these poor abandoned females,

males, who, like Eve in Paradise, is no sooner fallen herself, than, by deceitful artifice, she spreads the net of destruction to catch others. For example: need we go any farther than the theatres, the resort of all, both good and bad, and where abandoned females, of all ages and degrees of profligacy, attend to make their harvest, and gather in their unlawful plunder, to supply the ordinary wants of the ensuing day? And what can better answer the purpose of decoy than the drama? for, should it be comedy, the obscenity which prevails in many of our modern plays, cannot fail to act as poison upon the young mind: or is it tragedy, what can have a greater influence upon the feelings of sensibility, or sooner awaken the tender passions, which these miserable women take special care to translate to their own evil purposes? Perhaps, in drawing a smile of their own distress, or by some other artful representation or pretence, by which such numbers of innocent and inexperienced young men are artfully led astray, in their most unguarded moments, whilst seeking a rational and innocent amusement, as a relaxation

ation from the toils of the day, from which, too many have found themselves, at once, immersed in destruction, and ingulphed in the quicksands of vice.

Horrid destruction! if all, or the greatest part, of this originates from women being precluded from supporting themselves by means of some lawful employment, who will continue to countenance a precedent, big with so much destruction?

How many unhappy young men have fallen a sacrifice, both in mind and body, to the diabolical artifices which these poor, miserable, abandoned women are driven to practice for bread! And how many Barnwells, who, not able to support, by honest industry, the wants of a favourite mistress, have forcibly pursued such methods as have brought them to misery, shame, and death, and their distracted parents with sorrow to their graves! leaving behind them the remainder of an unprovided family, to toil up the steep of difficulty; and, *if females*, with all the tribulations before them which we have been just tracing in others!

Nor



Nor does the dreadful calamity end here; for, notwithstanding so many unfortunate females have been obliged to seek bread in the paths of vice, and so many young men have fallen victims to their folly and wickedness, still the same devouring jaws of destruction are open for its future prey; nor can they ever possibly close, until the grievous precedent of men usurping females' occupations is entirely done away, *or some proper substitute provided*, so as to enable women to share the common necessities along with their fellow-creatures: till then, we need not wonder at the vast number of pickpockets and housebreakers which, at all times, infest the streets, to the disturbance of all civil society; for we may again repeat with Milton, when night

"Dirkens the streets, then wander forth the sons

"Of Belial, flush'd with insolence and wine."

For when "young men, void of understanding," are seduced by such lawless and licentious methods to squander away, in riot and drunkenness, what they have obtained by unlawful plunder, it is no difficult task to find

out

Nor

out the cause of these nocturnal depredations; for we may naturally suppose, these poor unhappy women are always ready to benumb and drown their reflections with intoxicating liquors, the effects of which must lead them, with their wretched associates, into every excess of sin and wickedness, to the utter demolition of public happiness and safety, as well as incurring a heavy burden of expences upon the inhabitants.

It is said, the city of London alone pays upwards of twenty thousand pounds annually to patrols, beadles, and watchmen; and it may be a much greater sum; yet, that of itself seems a vast sum indeed, to be raised by levy, in which the honest trader must unavoidably contribute a large share. Would not that contribution answer a much better purpose in providing for the necessitous poor, such as we have just been treating of, and who are judged unfit objects to be received into a parish work-house; being, *as it is termed*, able enough to earn their own bread out of the house?

Yet, so long as there continues a prohibition against women having an employment, it

is to be feared, double the sum already raised by the inhabitants will be found inefficacious. But such is the link of progression, arising from this dreadful usurpation; which shews the necessity of entering into the origin of these melancholy truths, that so the chain of connection may be found whole; otherways, far be it from me to entertain a wish to offer to the generous part of my readers a work fraught with so many tragic representations: but, lest the want of a full narrative should leave the subject dark to comprehend, I still pursue my plan; and even should my zeal in the cause of happiness lead into an eccentric mode of writing, be it remembered it is an eccentric cause, but with a most sanguine wish to see all the inhabitants of this favoured isle become useful and happy members of society, instead of being the harpies of destruction.

That political and private happiness are invariably connected, is beyond a doubt; and that the morals of this nation are very corrupt, is but too visible, from the vast numbers of disgraceful women who infest the face of the country. As for the number of these miserable

ferable beings, it cannot be an easy matter to ascertain : but suppose, from the prodigious numbers, that are seen scattered about, like sheep having no shepherd, that in London, for example, there are five or six thousand : Nay; I have either read, or heard it said, ten thousand ! but how that calculation can be made, I shall not take upon me to say ; yet, suppose we call it half that number ; are not five thousand destitute females too many to suffer through so poor a cause, and will not a much less number suffice to contaminate the morals of more than half the youths in town, and prove a source of destructive oppression to a vast number of inhabitants ? for, without morals, how can we expect happiness, or what is to support the public good ?

Then, what sort of beings are they, who can, with impunity, oppress these unfortunate women, to the entire destruction of all happiness, both national and domestic ? Or where is the breast, truly warm in the cause of virtue and a country's good, who will suffer the continuance of a precedent so destructively oppressive, without exerting themselves in the cause ?

cause? for granting it is a great part of the Christian religion, to assist our neighbours as far as we are empowered. To neglect an investigation of these grievances admits no excuse, when once the clouds of obscurity are dispersed; for enquiry is the great source of knowledge.

From the holy scriptures we learn, that "Wisdom is justified in all her children;" and from what but wisdom and justice is derived the support of our common weal, by investigating which, will not the judicious quickly discover a numerous train of oppressive grievances not yet told. Let him but enquire the cause of such vast numbers of convicts having been sent abroad, to the great expence of the nation; and see if their connection with these necessitous women has not been a great means of their misfortunes: for, alas! young men, upon their first entrance into the world, are too often intoxicated with the pleasing, but baneful, draught of pleasures, till their senses are so much intoxicated, that they run they know not where, and at length find themselves ensnared in

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the net, which these poor abandoned women, or rather the instigators of their misery, have so artfully set to entrap the unwary.

Yet, a serious consideration, no doubt, will prompt an enquiry, and a perseverance in the pursuit; and surely we may hope, an undertaking, founded on such a basis as the laws of humanity, and a general good, can never fail of success. Nor will the more generous part of men-traders, such as are before described, delay to resign a privilege, maintained upon such unjust principles; for far, very far, be it from me to suppose, or entertain a wish to insinuate a supposition, that all effeminate tradesmen are equally guilty of a known violation. Nor is any individual accused for involuntary crimes: yet, does it not behove every member of society to inform themselves, especially when the object of enquiry is of such great magnitude, as to extend beyond the interest of individuals, and affect a whole community?

It is beyond a doubt, that many men, through the force of custom, are ignorant of the injury they are doing their neighbour,  
and

and mankind in general, the details of which I have very scrupulously collected, and may say with Shakespeare, I have "nothing extenuated, nor set down aught in malice."

Indeed, I have not a wish to accuse, or call in question, the conduct or motive of any individual. No: suffice it that I appeal to their own feelings, to humanity, and the gospel truths; after which, let the inward monitor of the guilty say,

"Thou art the man."

But permit me to infer, this self accusation only extends to one part of the oppressive body; yet, what is to be said for the remainder, who shall still persevere in persecuting these poor helpless women, to the subversion of all civil society? for, are we not told by the inspired writer, "It is not the will of our Father, which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Then, in compliance with our threefold obligation, are we not strictly enjoined to exhort our brethren to turn from their evil ways. What says St. Matthew, "If thy brother shall trespass

pass against thee, go and tell him his faults : but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

But by what means, less than enquiry, are we to know who our offending brother is? or why, in this enlightened age, is a business of so much consequence neglected! a business on which nothing less than the ruin or prosperity of a state depends; independent of Christianity or humanity, the great characteristic of the nation. Then, in a case where the whole is so strongly connected, why delay a single moment in the research. Indeed, it is a well-known maxim, and must be allowed, that those who are not forward in a cause, may be justly said to be against it; or, in other words, whoever is not the encourager of virtue, must unavoidably be the encourager of vice. But let the breast of sympathy participate in the sufferings of their fellow creatures. Let the tender eye  
of

of pity, which can so soon dissolve at an imaginary tragedy, a mere mock representation in a theatre, be truly melted into pity at real calamity.

That great numbers would be happy in contributing to the aid and relief of those who appear to be objects of distress, is beyond a doubt : but, alas ! for helpless, injured females ! the heavy clouds of prejudice and misrepresentation have thrown so dark a veil between them and the pity of the world, that they are despised by all. Yet, when the curtain is once withdrawn, and the tragic scene exposed to open view, leading these poor creatures from obscurity into open light, then will be the crisis, when every good Christian may be impowered to soften the affliction of another's woes ; and though it may not be in the power of every sympathising breast to contribute towards their temporal wants, they may still be impowered to sooth their sorrows, rather than drive the envenomed arrows of censure still deeper into their afflicted bosoms.

What kind of monument did the immortal Hervey make choice of for himself ? " Let me,"

me," says he, "leave a memorial in the breasts of my fellow-creatures. Let surviving friends bear witness, that I have not lived to myself alone, nor been altogether unserviceable in my generation. O! let an uninterrupted series of beneficent offices be the inscription, and the best interests of my acquaintance the plate that exhibits it. Let the poor, as they pass by my grave, point at the little spot, and thankfully acknowledge, there lies the man, whose unwearied kindness was the constant relief of my various distresses; who tenderly visited my languishing bed, and readily supplied my indigent circumstances. How often were his councils a guide to my perplexed thoughts, and a cordial to my dejected spirits."

And why may not the same inscriptive monument belong to many? It is in the power of any one to merit it, even by the good offices and tender concern for these poor objects, who, like a foot-ball, are still rolling upon the surface, ready to receive the next stroke, without being able to make the smallest resistance. Nor is there any other set of beings under the heavens, who stand in greater need of consolation



lation, than these poor unfortunate women: or who, through vile censure, receive less; consequently, the more desperate and distressing the case, the sympathy and condolence the more welcome; and will always, in some degree, soften and alleviate afflictions.

Indeed, it is not any, but the luke-warm, or misinformed, who requires to be reminded of such distress; for, where is the breast, truly warm in the cause of happiness, that is not hurt at the very sight of so many shocking spectacles in the streets. Even under the appearance of guilt, it is horrid to see human nature debased so low: but how much greater the sensations of pity, when it appears, the greatest part of the distress we see, is not through a vicious or depraved disposition, but absolute compulsion; through the encouragement given to a destructive custom, which permits men to enjoy a privilege, which nature never assigned them; and they are thereby encouraging vice to predominate, and holding virtue in fetters.

Consequently, whether this evil be persisted in through ignorance, from its being an an-

cient custom, or whether from the interested, narrow views of a malignant passion for gain; or from whatever cause, seeing it robs such a number of helpless women of employment and bread, it is a privilege, which, in justice to every tie of honour or conscience, ought to be relinquished, unless—I repeat it—a substitute is found.—Can it be termed either manly, honourable, or humane, to oppress industry and helpless innocence, and place them under the absolute necessity of sacrificing their virtue, their happiness, and every thing they hold dear, at the shrine of the avaricious, *and* (for the sake of distinction) *effeminate tradesmen*; and flying to the rendezvous of sin and wickedness, to support a miserable existence; and after, perhaps, having fallen a sacrifice to disease or compunction of mind, are possibly so fortunate as to gain the privilege of an asylum\*; a charity, which will ever redound honour to its illustrious patrons and benefactors, and will be a lasting monument of British munificence: and, it is hoped, and fervently wished, the noble example, and the

\* The Magdalen.

many proofs of its utility, may extend its influence over the remaining part of the benevolent, who are blessed with affluence, and that we may shortly see a similar institution take place, as an asylum of prevention, until a more effectual relief can be procured or given; for, whilst such salutary benefits may be derived from protecting the repenting sinner, how much greater will be the satisfaction in protecting innocence!

The Orphan Hospital also, is undoubtedly a most excellent charity, and preserves numbers of poor young creatures from the devouring jaws of seduction; and, to the immortal honour of its liberal benefactors, is most nobly and spiritedly supported: yet, it can but contain a small number out of the many who are left destitute; and even admitting the Orphan Asylum and the Magdalen Charity could contain the whole number of these unfortunate fugitives, there is still certain ages of admission and dismissal, the extent of which, though I am not certain, I presume seldom exceeds five or six and twenty years.

Then

Give me leave then to ask, what provision there is for unfortunate women, who are turned of that period, amongst whom are great numbers of widows, but just in the meridian of their days, who, after a life of affluence, and, perhaps, every ease and comfort, are now wandering about through this vale of tears, in the abject and forlorn condition just described; possibly driven from their homes by keen adversity, naked and destitute, in the most inclement season of the year, without a prospect, or means of any sort, for providing the common necessities of life, since every branch of trade is occupied by these usurpers of a female's right, till, at length, quite weary with fatigue and pining with hunger, the dreaded period arrives, "when, like a hunted bird, she becomes quite exhausted with fatigue," and weariness obliges her to fall to the ground, and become the prey or sport of every school-boy.

Poor, helpless creatures! will no one fly to their relief? They assuredly have a claim on the assistance and compassion of every one, and, I flatter myself, the generous feelings of

the humane will no sooner be sensible of their sufferings, than *all*, who wish well to the cause of virtue, will lend their assistance towards abolishing so destructive a precedent; and every lady, that has a wish to support the general character of her sex, will retire with indignation, when offered to be served by any of these authors of female destruction.

The efficacy of these reflections to a feeling and generous mind, that can participate in another's woes, cannot be doubted; yet what will all that pity or all that sympathy avail, unless some exertions are used towards effecting a redress?

Suppose no lady would suffer herself to be served, in the shops of these effeminate traders, by any of the short-clothed gentry, would it not be a means of compelling all those who chuse to carry on the tragi-comic farce, to effect the business under the disguise of gown and petticoat?

But joking apart: believe me, ladies, it is past a joke, when poor, unfortunate females are compelled to go without clothing, in order to support an army of Herculian figures

at



at the back of a counter, displaying the beauties of a lady's bandeau, or commenting upon the device of a fan.

Fie upon such conduct! let men act like men, and, as men of honour, support the dignity of their character. To hear them talk, they profess the finest feelings; but what do all these professions tend to? is it not an apparent solecism, that the same person, in the very moment they profess to be friends to civil society, should be loading the defenceless with unheard-of oppression? But let us, if you please, develop these assertions in the full light of impartial truth.

#### TRUTH AND REASON.

*An Imitation from Horace.*

"WHAT applause is not due to that excellent youth,

" (The last and the best of Darius's pages)

" Who wisely and nobly contended that truth

" Is the majesty, kingdom, and power of all ages!

" How different the wretch, who to right prefers wrong!

" To the guilt of his lie adding treason.

" For surely the miscreant, whose treacherous tongue

" Rebels against Truth, is a traitor to Reason.

" Together

"Together they sprung from th' Eternal great mind,  
"The honour, the peace, and the bond of mankind."

Since truth and reason closed the last sentence, what is there forbids making the next appeal to justice? and enquire, why these poor, helpless women are to be cut off from all civil society, and that at a period of life which might have been to them the most happy. Instead of rendering them noxious to community, they might have been useful members, as well as good Christians, and, in the end, have died the death of the just, having calmly passed through life, instead of being the dupes of an avaricious set of useless members, who, by their professions, are a degradation to the honourable title of MAN.

What is life? a bare existence, when compared with a life of civil security and freedom, neither of which do these unfortunate women experience: for, notwithstanding, sometimes even difficulties are instructive, and, in many cases, may prevent a number of unforeseen troubles, they cannot profit by their knowledge, from their not being empowered to exercise

exercise their talents. It is truly shocking to see such numbers of miserable wretches wandering about without employment, or any human comfort, either dressed up at the cost of their virtue and peace of mind, or in so wretched, forlorn, and abject a state, that they scarcely retain an appearance of their sex; thus dragging on a miserable existence, which nothing but the effects of a religious education can induce them to preserve. For, what is life without hope? and where is there the smallest glimpse of hope for them? they cannot fly from the frowns of the world, which on all sides attack them. Yet how astonishing is it, that the oppressions of these men, who are the authors of so much mischief, should so long have been passed unnoticed!

“But, every one that doeth evil hateth the light;” therefore the sufferings of these poor creatures are hid by the dark shade of misrepresentation. Did every one candidly deliver their sentiments without restraint, would it not be a means of affording a light to the discerning eye of impartiality to examine into these heinous grievances? for where no less  
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than private interest is the foundation of so much misery, dragging after it the most dreadful consequences, the origin of which, may we not suppose, proceeds from one of the three following causes, viz. A want of reflection, from its being a precedent of long standing; a wilful blindness, through avaricious views; or a downright want of understanding. The latter of which we hope is the case, that it may rest in their favour; for, where little is given, little may be required.

But ye of the world, whose understandings have so long been carried down the stream of misrepresentation, suffer not yourselves to be any longer led away by false and mistaken prejudice, nor let the innocent suffer with the guilty; for pity's sake, spare the innocent, although it be at the risk of suffering the guilty to go unpunished; mercy is Heaven's distinguished attribute, and contains a greatness next to celestial.

In searching for a date to the era of this destructive precedent, wherein men have been made substitutes in women's occupations, it will be found to be of very long standing; and  
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in its infancy might not, nor, perhaps, was not attended with the evils it has since produced; for, in those days, when manufactures and commerce were not so extensive, every situation and scene in life were in a more contracted state, and while the father and the brother were employed in trade, the mother and daughters were employed in the domestic concerns of the household. In fact, they were then the manufacturers also, and consequently were never at a loss for employment; they found enough to do in spinning, knitting, and preparing necessaries for the use of the family, which, being common, was not looked upon as any degradation.

But were the tradesman, in this refined age, to employ his wife or daughters in any such low capacity, what would the world suppose, or where would be his credit? Therefore, in exploring the case and its evil consequences, shall we not be well convinced, it is not custom alone which ought to constitute a right; for what precedent or practice ought to be supported upon unjust principles. Doubtless there have been various precedents, which  
 seemed



seemed good at the beginning, and yet have been productive of much evil in the end, as the one in question; at the commencement of which, as I before observed, it might be, and was, a very laudable pursuit; for, in those days, when all things were in a more contracted state, and trade not so universally extended, the father of a family was glad to dispose of his sons to such mechanical branches of trade as first presented, that his son might be empowered to improve or increase his little fund, and be able to make a provision, not only for himself, but for a wife which, in primitive times, he was obliged to endow.

Alas! how much unlike our modern days, when women endow their husbands, and, with large portions, frequently purchase a very heavy bondage.

In fact, the generality of things appear to be diametrically opposite to what they were in former times.

We need but look back about three centuries, and then see the vast change; for example: What would be the consequence, were a labourer, in the present times, to receive no

better wages than a penny a day, which used to be the standard even in the reign of Henry VII\*. and in the reign of Henry VIII. it did not exceed three halfpence? Must not every one allow, so small a recompence, in the present times, insufficient to exist upon, and much less to support a family. Still, in those days, it was found a sufficient provision, and they could live comfortably upon it; but the reason is evident; every article of provision at that time bore a very inferior price to what it does now. Wheat, for example, which we may call the first grand article of provision, sold in King Henry VII.'s reign† at so low a price as three shillings per quarter, and every other article equally cheap; which enforces a conviction, that through time all things alter. Therefore, to come to the point in view, whilst all things change according to the state of times and contingencies, why exclude poor females from a small share in the

\* Vide stat. 11th of Henry VII. and stat. 6. of Henry VIII. concerning artificers.

† Vide Baker's Chronicle.

improvements? it is well known they cannot defend themselves.

Were a body of miserable women, be they really virtuous or not, to assemble with a petition to parliament, where is the person who would be persuaded to present it, particularly when they are all considered as worthless wretches.

But were a body of men artificers (be their conduct or morals as they may) to offer a representation of grievances, doubtless their case would be heard, and considered, in every sense of the word, both political and humane.

Yet I would gladly believe, these differences must alone proceed from the defect of not knowing the true state of grievances; for, in every other case of oppression, except the one in question, do we not always find a protection from the police of the country? consequently, there is no fear, but a serious investigation will throw open the iron gates of misrepresentation, and lead to the avenues of happiness, both for these poor women and the community in general.

I acknowledge, we are too apt to call things just, that have been long in practice; and, through ancient custom, these oppressive tradesmen act in open defiance of either equity or conscience, thinking none will call them to account, and they may still ride triumphant upon the stream of avarice. But let not a precedent, abounding with so much mischief, any longer disgrace the age; let not virtue and happiness any longer be bartered, which, in the present case, they evidently are, to the abuse of all civil society, and disuniting the very bands of mutual benefit and preservation; nor suffer these men to monopolize the whole from the female part of the creation, unless there is a provision made to secure them from penury.

Nothing, it is presumed, can be more reasonable and just, than that those who deprive others of subsistence should contribute to their support. For what law, either divine or human, will justify the continuance of a precedent, which has influence sufficient to prevail over the virtue of individuals? What statute is there, which grants that men alone shall live,  
and

and women scarcely exist?—Is it not an usurpation which every violator must blush at, when considered in the light it ought to be, as an act of the greatest injustice? Then, drive hence all such distress: let it not be said, that Britons can cherish a wish to oppress their sisters, wives, and mothers, but rather that they are merciful to the fatherless and the widow; and though the mischief of this iniquitous precedent should lie too deep to be cured by any thing less than a total suppression, can it be called an invasion of right? No; it is only the suppression of an usurped prerogative; and cannot fail to be productive of every good, not only in clearing the streets of prostitutes, but in providing a sufficient number of proper and fit hands, *in time of peace*, for the various manufactories which, it must be granted, it is always the interest of Britain to cherish; and in such calamitous times as these, by having ready a sufficient number of soldiers and sailors fit for service, without being driven to so many expensive and oppressive expedients: independent of the little need there is of throwing any thing in the way to send



such colonies abroad, to the prodigious expence of the nation, or suffering such numbers of men idling at the back of a counter, when they might be employed to so much better advantage. The enormous expence attending all these things, must be visible to every one who will take the trouble to look ; therefore, it is unnecessary to weary my readers with a recital of these heavy expences or grievances, farther than is absolutely necessary; for a short reflection must convince every enquirer, that to countenance this evil precedent, is not only robbing poor females of their birthrights, which they are not empowered to contend for, but is actually robbing the whole country of its right, as well as safety and happiness, and doubtless is tending to impoverish the nation.

“ But view them closer, craft and fraud appear,

“ E’en liberty itself is barter’d here.”

GOLDSMITH.

These are facts, not founded on theory alone, which might be greatly enlarged upon, were the pen of information in the hand of one of those humane, generous, and learned

learned philanthropists, who distinguish themselves by a cheerful and ready exertion in the cause of justice and retribution, and who, being conversant in the language of the law, might trace all the precedents, acts, and repeals, with their conveniencies and inconveniencies, from Adam to Magna Charta, and from thence to the present day ; when, alas ! it is a female's province only (if a mother) to nurse, cherish, and watch over her darling son, who, perhaps, in maturity, may be the foremost in adding to the weight of this oppressive burden. " Art thou one of them ! " said Julius Cæsar to his son, when he saw him amongst those that murdered him. That went deeper to his heart than the swords of all his enemies.

Let then the claim to these female occupations be developed ; let not an indelible stain be fixed on the character of men ; for, when the affair is finally discussed, will these grievances sound credible to the ear of posterity ? Let not then our annals be stained with suffering a longer continuance of so much misery, but let an immediate interference take place.

Why shall the deliberate destroyers of happiness be suffered to continue, without some notice being taken of their inhuman and avaricious guilt? To refuse a compliance with this request, is to become enemies to peace and happiness: to enjoy the necessaries of life is an invaluable right, which each individual expects to share in common with his neighbour; and, in fact, is what all do share, more or less, except the identical women in question.

The very poor, who are born in an abject state, are taught from their infancy to struggle through life in the same manner they see their needy connections: bread must be had, and all the instructions they can possibly get, is in what way to obtain it. Consequently, if by labour and industry, they can acquire a sufficiency to exist upon, they are perfectly at ease, without bestowing a single thought upon to-morrow.

But the poor, unfortunate woman, who has seen better days, and been reared and educated with tenderness and care, she it is that feels her broken slumbers can no longer give relief

to her weary limbs. Her inability to wrestle with difficulties are great indeed; especially when she finds her whole endeavours fruitless: and, what is still as bad, by running to and fro, in pursuit of some means for bread, (which she is not able to obtain) the shrill voice of censure, or the destructive whisper of calumny, having breathed such a poisonous vapour over her character, she is despised by all, in the manner described in the foregoing pages, and irremediably doomed to sink, never more to rise; for, who will admit a woman of lost reputation into their house? O, cruel censure! what must be the sensations of oppressed innocence, under the censure of guilt! Even what is it they do not feel, on the bare appellation of idle and disorderly, when they have tried every expedient to obtain employment, though to no effect?

Under such a pressure of misfortunes, they must bear their sorrows in silence, unknown and unpitied! and must frequently put on a face of cheerful serenity, when their hearts are torn with secret grief. Thus they pass their time in sorrow, till they meet the  
fatal

fatal alternative, either to be passive under the horrors of a prison, or compound for their preservation, by entering under the infernal roof of vice for protection.

When such an alternative is presented, what is to be expected? Should they evade the latter by conforming to the former, what is to be the advantage? I believe, it is generally allowed, that all prisons, or places of confinement, are but poor schools for virtue; and that youth and inexperience, or even those of a more advanced age, seldom return to the world without being, in some degree, contaminated; for it is not to be supposed, that these poor, miserable mortals are invulnerable. Indeed, should they even pass through these tracts unpolluted, it is next to impossible they should still escape destruction. After the death of kindred, faithlessness of friends, misfortunes, and disgrace, where are they to find a plank to save them from the wreck, where they see so many tossing up and down before them? and may very applicably say, with Pope's Sappho,

“ Shall



" Shall fortune still in one sad tenor run,

" And still increase the woes so soon begun?"

But it is yet to be hoped, the charitable and humane will step forward in the cause, and no longer suffer the noble faculties of the understanding to remain buried in a torpid state of acquiescence to outward appearances, whilst such numbers are labouring under the most pitiable distress, and so many honest, industrious tradesmen and mechanics are obliged to contribute to the cause, which the profligacy of these distressed women brings upon the community.—Although it be supposed the most judicious cannot foresee or provide against every fraud or accident, yet, from the deep penetration and strict justice of such as are in power, there is not a doubt, but some plan will be adopted for the benefit of the whole, and some expedient thought of, as a temporary relief, for these distressed women, until a more permanent arrangement of things can take place. Indeed, it is possible some difficulties may arise, from the complication of the undertaking, yet what is it hu-

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man efforts cannot effect, when aided by divine promise? which says, "Whatever you do unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

An undertaking commenced upon such grounds, must infallibly be productive of great good, and in that step alone, can we fail to see many of these usurpers drop away in confusion and shame, whilst the remainder, being held up to public ridicule, which they so justly merit, must quickly follow? for, should they be suffered to continue in their effeminate and unmanly employment, and neither be forced nor shamed out of their evil courses, where will they stop, or what will be the consequence?

"But whatsoever thou findest to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest \*."

\* Ecclesiastes, ch. ix, v. 10.

THE

# FEMALE ADVOCATE.

## PART SECOND.

*A Continuation of the foregoing.*

*Which demonstrates that the Frailty of Female Virtue  
more frequently originates from embarrassed Cir-  
cumstances, than from a depravity of  
Disposition.*

HAVING given a faint sketch of the grand  
cause which precludes women from partaking  
in the comforts of life, let us next proceed to  
the avenue which leads to so much misery.  
Doubtless, through the vicissitudes of human  
affairs, neither great riches nor great happiness  
are

are always permanent ; the dark and crooked paths of fate are, by the unerring hand of Divine Providence, hid from mortal eyes : nor can we see into futurity. “ To-day we are here, and to-morrow in the grave ;” or, according to the Proverbs, chap. xxvii. v. 1. “ Who knoweth what a day may bring forth ?” For how often does death, insatiable death, unexpectedly snatch, in a moment, the indulgent parent from the beloved child, who is at once left at large in the wide world, perhaps in the morning of her days, and in all the simplicity of artless youth, without a provision, or any means of obtaining one. Pitiab!e object! thy fate seems hard indeed : yet so it but too frequently happens to hundreds, besides thyself. Where wilt thou go, to secure thee from real want ? A parish workhouse is but a poor consolation for so great a loss, at a period when neither reason nor religion is ripened into maturity, to moderate the grievance. But, if, perhaps, a friend step forward, the Asylum for the protection of Orphan Girls may receive the poor fugitive ; in which blessed and happy institution, through time, the memory

of

of her woeful loss, in parents and provision, may, in some degree, be wiped away in the benevolence of her new protectors, who not only provide for her temporal, but also for her spiritual concerns, in instructing her as a good Christian and a useful member. But, alas! small is the number which this institution can admit, when compared with the vast numbers left in similar situations. And for those, who are more advanced in age, to what standard can they repair? It is true, necessity will teach people to exert themselves, who have nothing but their own industry to depend upon, and consequently they seek for a female occupation. But how great their surprise, and inexpressible their grief, to find, like the rest, that they are repulsed in every pursuit of industry, whereby they might expect a maintenance!

Good Heavens! what course can a poor, young creature pursue, when, from the quick transition from good to evil, at that early period of life, when discernment has not made its way to a knowledge of the world, she is at once on the verge of the precipice, where so many have unhappily been lost? Without a pilot,



pilot, she finds herself launched out into the ocean of the world, where she floats about for awhile, until she perceives her danger, and would gladly retreat; but neither meeting protection nor aid, necessity drives her back, and she shortly engages in the dissipation of the age, and at once becomes the object of scorn and contempt, and the real food for scandal; in which deplorable state she finds herself involved, even before she is aware of her danger, which no sooner presents itself to her view, but she endeavours to retreat and clear away the black vapour; but, alas! though short-lived the experiment, it is now too late! for the misty cloud of obloquy has discoloured her reputation, and she is now doubly distant from a friend to defend her, or point out a mode of redress; for the unfeeling part of the world exclaims, in the words of a much-admired writer,

“How shall I then your helpless fame defend?”

“’Twill then be infamy to seem your friend.” Pope

No: her supplication is not noticed, notwithstanding

withstanding "God hath given to every one the charge of his neighbour."

This excellent charge being so very seldom put in practice, superadded to her youth and inexperience, she not being sufficiently armed with that fortitude, which is so necessary in her time of trial, and seeing the frowns of the world against her, she naturally perseveres, and even launches out still farther in the stream of those false and mistaken pleasures, which cannot fail to terminate in her destruction; and, perhaps, at length, she triumphs in obtaining (what she thinks) protection from those whose acknowledged right it is to guard the weaker sex.

But here, alas! under the specious name of friendship, she too soon sees her mistake, and finds herself the real object of distress, abandoned by the world, and left to her own bitter reflections; until the kind hand of Providence once more takes her under protection, and admits her a member of that humane charity, the Magdalen; where, in a small degree, she is once more permitted to taste a portion of comfort, by the cheering rays of

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Christian charity; and her oppressed spirits are somewhat enlivened by the following sweet and comfortable discourse from the Matron, on her admission into that most excellent charity.

“ You cannot be insensible of the kindness of providence in bringing you hither; the wretched situation you are reduced to seems to offer you no other relief. Your interest and ours is the same; we mean to do you all the good we can, and you to have good done to you; we mean to render you happy in this world, and what is of much greater moment, in the next also \*.”

How can charity be better employed than in taking care of the soul as well as the body? This is, perhaps, the most comfortable discourse she has heard since death closed the lips of her dear parents. Yet how much greater would be the charity for protecting the innocent, than in reclaiming the guilty? Prevention must certainly be better than cure; and

\* Vide Rules and Regulations of the Magdalen Charity.

were

were there a capacious establishment for industry, built upon such a basis as would form a discrimination between the well-bred female, who is reduced by the unseen hand of fate, and the very poor and abject, whose birth has deprived them of the knowledge of refinement or delicacy ; what crouds of unprovided women would flock to the standard !

But, in the mean time, it cannot fail to afford infinite satisfaction to the humane contributors, by enabling the poor penitent to repeat the following hymn of admission.

“ Rise, O my soul ! the hours review,

“ When aw’d by guilt and fear,

“ Thou durst not heaven for mercy sue,

“ Nor hope for pity here.

“ Dried are thy tears, thy griefs are fled,

“ Dispell’d each bitter care ;

“ See, heaven itself has lent its aid,

“ To raise thee from despair.

“ Here then, O God ! thy work fulfil,

“ And from thy mercy’s throne,

“ Vouchsafe me strength to do thy will,

“ And to resist my own.

“ So shall my soul each power employ,

“ Thy mercies to adore,

“ Whilst heav’n itself proclaims with joy,

“ One pardon’d sinner more.”

How nearly do the humane contributors to this excellent charity imitate the compassionate sentence of our blessed Lord, when he bade the offending woman “ Go, and sin no more? ” For there is scarcely a period in life, when the most irregular characters may not be reclaimed. It is through misfortunes and a want of employment, that such as these poor, helpless, young creatures have brought so great an additional load of heavy misfortunes upon their guilty heads; yet, we are told, there is joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner:—What a blessed institution, then, to provide a means for that purpose!

Human nature is undoubtedly liable to corruption, yet it is impregnated with the seeds of virtue; and when the mind is properly cultivated, they will quickly grow up and ripen into good works. It must afford a most lively and pleasing sensation to the humane and sympathising breast, in contributing their  
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endeavours, to let the memory of former woes be lost in the enjoyment of present blessings.

Compassion is a heaven-born virtue, and not only consoles the innocent, but is the first step to reclaim the guilty: a kind and gentle treatment must ever be efficacious, when harsh proceedings, in general, drive to desperation. For the truth of this, we need but scrutinize our own hearts, (the golden rule is a most excellent guide) and there see, on a serious investigation, if any one of us is not more ready to comply, in any case whatever, by lenient means, than from the force of peremptory methods.

Yes: the most obdurate sinner, if possessed of one single spark of grace, on the repeated calm admonitions of a good Christian, cannot suppress that spark from kindling into a flame of gratitude, at least, and must blush at their perfidy; whereas the hardened wretch, by constant upbraidings and severe treatment, becomes callous to every thing.

Therefore, these poor young women, who have, through extreme necessity, been driven

to criminal and unlawful pursuits, are not to be despised or sunk beneath our care, but cherished and supported, in order to reclaim their wicked course of life. What says the oracle of truth?—Whilst we have time, let us do good, for the night cometh, when no man can work.

For the opulent, and those in power, to suppose they have done their part, in helping to relieve their spiritual wants only, is a mistake; so long as the soul and body act in unison, provision must be made for their temporal necessities also. What says St. James, chap. ii. v. 15 and 16. "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

But in the humane charity of the Magdalen, as well as in others, the wants of the needful are plentifully supplied, both as to soul and body, and as many destitute objects received as the foundation of the institution will admit; and, in general, such as these it

is of whom we have been discoursing (if in London) who reap the benefit. Their ages of admission being from sixteen to twenty-six years, between which periods they, in general, find their fatal mistake, and are happy to find an asylum under so beneficent an institution. Or if, unhappily, their situations in life are too far distant, or other casual accidents prevent them from obtaining the benefit, they must inevitably fall a victim to their misfortunes and vice, and the world's contempt. Which brings to my remembrance a poem, entitled *The Country Church Yard*.

"Where the long grafs obscures yon briery grave,

"And antique yews their branches sadly wave,

"A wretched female, with the silent dead,

"Unnotic'd, unlamented, rests her head.

"No weeping friend is seen to deck her bier,

"Or o'er her ashes shed the tender tear:

"But, buried in the tomb's sad mouldering heap,

"Her sorrows and her fate in silence sleep.

"'Tis beauteous Jeffrey's frail, neglected shade,

"Whose pale form swells the solitary glade.

"Ah, hapless fair! I hear the still flow gale,

"Which bore thy death-bell through the hollow vale,

“ When thy sad spirit, freed from misery’s load,  
“ In trembling expectation, sought its last abode.  
“ Though vice awhile obscur’d thy rising fame,  
“ And stamp’d with early infamy thy name.  
“ Yet o’er thy grave, mid sober evening’s shade,  
“ The muse with pitying tear shall swell the glade,  
“ And tell the villain’s guilt, whose perjur’d art,  
“ From virtue’s path allur’d thy simple heart,  
“ When without parents, in that early day,  
“ When youth most wants a guide to lead the way,  
“ Then false to honour, truth, and promis’d love,  
“ Left thee alone in life’s wide course to move.”

Notwithstanding the misfortunes of such poor young creatures are truly pitiable, others there are whose case is still more lamentable. But to conduct my readers to the various avenues which lead to the destruction and misery of the female part of the creation, would swell this volume to a greater bulk than is intended; therefore shall content myself with just touching upon a few characters, who have been plunged into this dreadful pit of destruction, by the known misconduct of connections, or the mishap of human events. From such as these it is we must gather our information. Doubtless, imagination might lead to a number

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ber of visionary flights, but, by engaging with personalities, the faculties are confined, and external appearances must distinguish the objects.

Let us then commence with a gentleman of small, independent fortune; for, as it is the general maxim through life, that every one should endeavour to outvie his neighbour, the gentleman also must keep up appearances for the benefit of his family (as he is pleased to term it;) and, in the present day, where do we see the father or mother of a family, with an independent fortune, be it ever so small, who would not be shocked at the bare idea of placing their daughter in the world in such situations as would enable them to rise, through their own industry and merit, or fit them for becoming wives to some honest and industrious tradesman?—No: that would be a degradation which must not take place. It is the etiquette of the times for the daughters to be bred fine ladies, although it be without a fortune, either dependent or independent, to support it. As for trade, that is out of the question. The sons indeed are differently provided: the eldest,



dest, in course, inherits the paternal estate, and the younger ones are placed in the church, the army, the navy, or at the bar ; and others, again are genteelly situated in the mercantile world : the whole of which are fit professions for a gentleman, and by which, if they have merit and success, they may acquire a competency.

But for the female part of the family, what appears in their favour ? what prospects have they in life ?—The parents die, and leave them, without a provision, a burden upon their connections ; which forms the first step to deprive them of friends as well as subsistence. A miserable inheritance, to be their best and only portion ! What can be said in behalf of such parents ? can their easy compliance with the fashion of the times form any apology for such a mistaken conduct ?—This surely cannot be called true paternal affection, to entail upon these helpless young creatures such a succession of misery as must eventually ensue. Is not this a sufficient definition of the second divine commandment, that “ the sins of the father shall descend to their children,

children, to the third and fourth generation." Which under such circumstances is justly verified; for, what less than a miracle can destroy the entail of misery brought upon helpless innocence, by the sins of their parents? which, however harsh the term, is worse than Herod's cruelty; that could only affect the body, but by a compliance with this mistaken folly of the day, there is a great chance of its affecting the soul also.

What was it brought ruin upon the first distressed female, who was admitted into the Magdalen Charity; and what but a miracle led her to taste comfort\*?

What numbers of helpless and destitute young women there are, who, seeing themselves neglected and despised by their connections, notwithstanding all the refined and delicate ideas which their education and mode of bringing up have possessed them with, would gladly endeavour, through necessity, to make up the deficiency of their parents' neglect, by

\* See a book, entitled *The Magdalen, or a History of the First Penitents received into that charitable Asylum.*

putting

putting themselves forward in the world, in order to obtain a support. But, alas! to their sorrow, they quickly see it is not in their power; for, under their present circumstances, "the world is not their friend, nor the world's laws;" and what was not effected by their parents, cannot possibly be obtained by an inexperienced young woman.

Indeed, it is frequently said, the female part of the creation are by far the most ready in censuring their own sex. But permit me to ask, would it not be highly reprehensible in any lady to countenance even the appearance of a guilty conduct? By so doing, it is not only the means of encouraging vice, but must unavoidably incur censure upon herself, which, above all other misfortunes in life, is the most to be dreaded, since a female character, once lost, is for ever irretrievable. But, in justice to my own sex, I would gladly hope, there is not a female, who really considers the many horrid mischiefs which are the attendants upon censure, who will ever suffer the smallest intimation thereof to escape the bounds

bounds of her own breast, unless through the most flagrant proofs of guilt.

Out of the many, some there are, no doubt, who, to colour their own vicious lives, are ever ready to murder the character of any one, without taking the smallest thought or concern as to the consequences, nor even sparing the innocent with any greater degree of lenity than they would the guilty. But of this class we hope there are but few; for, why should it be supposed that female objects in distress, particularly those who have youth and beauty on their side, must unavoidably be objects of contempt rather than pity? From what motive can this certain part of the sex continue to load the sufferings of these poor, helpless women with reviling and contempt? None other, I must repeat it, but to draw a veil over their own vicious lives; for neither religion nor virtue ever countenanced so much injustice. To load the poor sufferer with calumny, is cruel indeed; suffice it, she has to struggle with the hardships of penury!

Let them be traced along from the moment that fate's afflicting hand is stretched out against them:

them : trace them through every stage of life ; and then see if they are not the most pitiable of all mortals ! Then, how can the time of the opulent part of the sex be better employed, than in searching into the source of their sorrows, and endeavouring to obtain redress ? To investigate the cause will bespeak a remedy near at hand. But for a continuation of the various distresses which poor females are subject to, we need but take a general review, and represent the case as it evidently is, which will save the unpleasant task of using names : for, it is to be feared, few there are who have any knowledge of life, but can reason upon this subject, if not through fatal self-experience, yet through experimental observations on others. For example : how often do we see whole families entirely ruined by the improper conduct of a husband or father, who, through giving way to some predominant vice, at once overwhelms the whole of his family in ruin and distress, or, at least, the female part of it, who, not being able to defend themselves, or seek redress, are liable to every misfortune.

How



How far the wife was intended to be the slave to her husband, I know not, but certain we are, she was designed to be his friend, his companion, and united part; or, according to the gentlemen's phrase, his *better part*; and yet how often do we see her sinking under the burden of a household load, whilst the unfeeling husband is lavishing away the substance which ought to be for the comfort and support of a family? Yet such unnatural beings there are, who, by giving way to some unlawful passion, can, without scruple or remorse, trample under foot all laws, divine and human, and with impunity bring wretchedness upon those he is bound to support: notwithstanding St. Paul tells us, "if any one provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Let us but look at the many unhappy females, who come to ruin through mercenary marriages. How many are the instances of young women, who have been brought up in affluence, and reared with all the tender care and attention, which are in the power of

of maternal affection to bestow ; yet, perhaps, through her youthful follies and credulity, she is led away by the artifice and false pretensions of one of these mercenary men, on whom she cheerfully bestows her patrimony, whether acquired by inheritance, or the smiles of fortune upon the honest industry of her deceased parents, avails not, for her expected happiness is vanished in empty air, and she is quickly exposed to all the ills of fate.

“ O thoughtless mortals ! ever blind to fate,

“ Too soon dejected, and too soon elate.

“ Sudden their honours shall be snatch'd away,

“ And doom'd for ever this victorious day.” POPE.

As leading to a further explanation, let us represent a case which very frequently happens. A gentleman's daughter, one of these well-bred young ladies, which was spoken of at the beginning of this discourse ; or be it a tradesman's daughter, it matters not, they being equally trained up in the same liberal plan of female education, married to a respectable and worthy tradesman, who, we will say, according to the common run of the times, has  
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made choice of a very proper partner for superintending the domestic concerns of his household, and conducting a table with taste; which, according to the beau monde, must undoubtedly be complied with, since his credit in trade so greatly depends upon appearances; and however great may be his dislike to the practice, yet *he* it is that is absolutely obliged to comply with the custom of the times, and make a figure in life, in order to support the credit of his trade; a precedent big with every evil consequence, yet he must comply, and act like his neighbour, if he expects to receive neighbour's fare. Therefore, before we censure or condemn such conduct in any one individual, let us, if you please, place choice and necessity in the scales of justice, and see which will preponderate.

I recollect an observation upon this subject some time ago, made by a noble and very learned man, the Earl of ——. Says his lordship, "it is the tradesman and mechanic who are under the necessity of making a figure in life, in order to catch notice and obtain credit in their line of business." But, continued his

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lordship.

lordship, "for such as me there is no occasion, and consequently we can save whilst they are obliged to spend: we can live as we please, dress as we please, and, in fine, act as we please; for our independence and ancestry will always command respect, and enable us to do as we like."

I must confess, I thought it was a hard case, that so many sensible, clever men, of an inferior class, with regard to pecuniary matters, should absolutely be held down for what was not a fault; but, after a moment's consideration, I could not help joining in the validity of his lordship's opinion. Although I knew, at the same time, his lordship was frequently ridiculed for the meanness of his table and dress; yet, it occurred to me, that *did not* erase any names from his lordship's rent-roll; though the same conduct might occasion a great deficiency in a tradesman's ledger.

In fine, need we advance any further than Change-alley for a confirmation, that it is in compliance with evil customs, and a conformity to destructive precedent, that bring on such a train of misfortunes, with the greatest force,

force, which is sure to fall where there is the least resistance? How frequent and sudden are the fluctuations in the stocks, owing to the artifices of stock-jobbers, under some false pretence or other: notwithstanding it is a practice so highly detested, both by government and the generality of the parties concerned, yet appearances take the lead; so that, however wrong the practice, since the tradesman finds the absolute necessity of acting like his neighbour, no doubt but a generous public will either point out an expedient, or absolve him, at least, from censure, let the consequence prove how it may. Pope says,

“ True conscientious honour is to feel no sin,  
 “ He’s arm’d without that’s innocent within:”

and very justly so, *with regard* to men; but for poor women, the weight of all these grievances must unavoidably rest upon them, as the weakest sex; who, having struggled through the labyrinth of misfortunes, no sooner arrive at the gate of industry, viz. *female occupations*, than they find it shut, and men, so much stronger, and in power, the porters at the door.



So, begging pardon for the digression, we will leave these poor unfortunate women at the gate, and peeping through the wicket to no effect, till we proceed with our young couple, who journey on a few years through this maze of life, a life that seems calculated for felicity, happy in each other, and blessed with a rising progeny, which, in course becomes the mother's care, whilst the father, attentive to the interest of his family, endeavours to extend his trade for the mutual advantage of all; and thus tied with the filken bands of unity, they pass their days in one continued round of bliss, actuated by the amiable endearments of the affectionate father, the fond husband, and the generous friend. But, alas! how frequently does the malice of fate unseen, pursue, and often blast, the happiness of human enjoyments.

" Ah gentle pair! ye little think how nigh

" Your change approaches, when all these delights

" Will vanish and deliver ye to woe,

" More woe, the more your taste is now of joy."

MILTON.

Next

Next, let us suppose, which supposition too is frequently realized, that the father of this happy family, whom we have just left in the sunshine of prosperity, and in the full enjoyment of conjugal and paternal bliss, is snatched away by the hand of death, and leaves his disconsolate widow, in the meridian of her days, surrounded by her innocent offspring, who must now look up to her alone for protection, which even herself may stand in need of.

How keen, how poignant must be her grief at such a separation, when, at once, she is robbed of a tender husband, and her children of an indulgent father! Yet, like a true Christian, she endeavours to arm herself with such fortitude as is necessary to support her in the time of trial; and by the help of reason and religion, she begins to revive, and flatters herself with new hopes, in the many comforts she is to receive from her darling children.

Short-sighted mortal! she now begins to take new courage, from having subdued her stubborn heart to submit, as she thinks, to her greatest affliction; which, alas! is no more than a prelude to her future misfortunes: for

her late husband's concerns come next to be adjusted, when it is found there is a very small provision, if any, left for herself and helpless children: for the deceased husband, having been under the necessity of deceiving the world by the vile pretext of appearances, has now involved his family in the unavoidable necessity of seeing the world had deceived him; the dreadful consequences of which they are now left to struggle with. These are real trials: yet how frequently do they happen! and now, at once, are all her expectations of future happiness blasted; an intervening cloud has darkened the scene, and that maternal triumph which used to gladden the face of the fond mother, is now done away by the dark gloom of adversity; and her sorrows are like the impetuous torrent. A family, brought up and educated with the idea of being gentlemen and ladies, who have just been figuring away in the gaieties of life, to find themselves entangled in a wilderness of misery, without money, and consequently without friends, or any means of support, requires more than human strength to combat; for, in such a melancholy

lancholy situation, independent of real want, the struggles of reluctant nature are not easy to suppress. The parent, the virtuous and tender mother, sees her darling offspring, with all their innocence about them, upon the verge of destruction, yesterday, in the full enjoyment of all the happiness this world can bestow, and to-day turned adrift into the wide world, attended with all those fine and delicate feelings which nature, education, and a pious example could bestow. Yet, all cannot save them from the cruel hand of fate, the die is cast, and they must now bid adieu to the comforts of life, and plunge forward in an ocean of misery; for, by this time, their small fund being nearly, if not quite, exhausted, the distressed mother finds the absolute necessity of making her unhappy situation known to some relation, or former acquaintance, which she had used to call friend. But, alas! she has yet to learn, the world in general takes but little concern for the fate of individuals, and too oft, will sooner upbraid than relieve distress; and so precarious is the possession of friendship, that, *in general*, on the approach of

distress, it dissolves like snow under the rays of the sun, or evaporates, like ether, at the approach of poverty: yet, such an unfeeling class there are, who, in prosperity, used to extol her conduct; and are, perhaps, at the very moment decking out themselves, table, and family after her example, and yet can be the first to brand her name with obloquy.

O, cruel censure, are not the pangs of distress and poverty enough to bear! is this Christian charity! is this acting the part of the good Samaritan! Yet, yet, it is past dispute, that such distress does afflicted poverty experience, although the cordial of friendship, and the benevolent sympathy of fellow mortals would so very much alleviate: however, by woeful experience, beginning to see the world in its true colours, she sees her only resource is in the consolation of religion, and in an humble submission to the Divine Will; and with this shield, she endeavours to guard herself and innocent suffering offspring from the impending, storm which appears ready to burst upon their unfortunate heads. Still their pious and laudable endeavours will  
not



not alone supply the necessity of extreme want; they are mortal, and consequently both nature and duty press hard upon the unhappy mother, to look into the world for a means of support; for now every prospect of happiness to her future days is blackened by anxious care, and, perhaps, at a period which might have been expected the happiest of her life: but since adversity has taught her submission, and she finds she has to climb up the steep of difficulty, with her children dragging after her like so many clogs at her feet, to retard her progress, her first step is to look out for situations for her sons, to whom Providence having denied an education, so as to command such situations in life as the generality of men are enabled to look up to, and without the aid of connections, or friends, to lead them out into the world; if the poor mother can obtain for them a situation at the back of a counter, it is the highest step in life which she can sue for, *or expect*; and *such as these*, indeed, are an exception as to filling women's occupations; for, if nothing else presents, what are they to do? But for the poor mother,

mother, who perhaps has not yet attained her thirty-fifth year, and her still unfortunate daughters, what is there in their favour? without money, friends, character, or means of industry, they are unavoidably doomed to wretchedness, if any thing on earth can be wretched, notwithstanding her utmost exertions, as well as her pious and exemplary conduct to her children, who, not insensible to her merit, endeavour to soothe her sorrows by their tender regard and fond affections.

Alas! what can they do, they all seem to look up to the poor mother for aid, who has it not in her power even to help herself. She now takes a serious retrospect of her past life, and the mode of education in which herself and children have been trained, and most ardently does she wish they had been reared with industry at least, instead of all those bright accomplishments, which must unavoidably be lost in their misfortunes. But, since there is no recalling past time, their only redress is, to try to get into some situation where their endeavours and exertions, at least, will make up the deficiency of their want of knowledge. What, but such  
distress

distress as this, and the want of a proper education, *or trade*, is it which fill the papers daily with wants of every kind? "Wants a situation to superintend;" or, "A person who has seen better days, would be glad to undertake;" or, "Wants a situation, as companion or assistant, &c.;" little supposing how frequently these advertisements get answered by that arrogant set of mortals we before spoke of, with the common phrase of, "I want no gentlewomen, or gentlewomen's daughters;" and although this assertion may sound harsh to the ears of the humane and sympathising part of the community, be assured, this and such like unfeeling cruelty is exercised over the unfortunate, even by their own sex, and those whose professed feelings are so fine, as to shed tears over a novel, or faint at the rehearsal of a tragedy; however, of these we hope the number is small.—Seeing these women are excluded all benefit in trade, what else can they have recourse to, but to seek an asylum under the roof of the affluent, in some menial capacity? which brings to my memory the contents of the tenth letter of the first Magdalen who

who was admitted into that most excellent charity.

“ I was reduced,” says she, “ to the manifest danger of starving. I would have attempted the most laborious work, but no one would try me, although I offered my labour at half price ; but even my industry was made an argument against me : I must, they said, be very bad to be reduced to that, and they supposed, I intended to steal the other part of my wages.

“ To be willing and able to work, and yet to starve for want of employment, seemed a hard fate, yet it touched no heart but my own.”

What a miserable prospect for helpless innocence ! What a shocking case, that poor unfortunate females should be denied the privilege of obtaining a support by servitude, after being precluded earning an honest maintenance, by any other means of industry, merely to make way for a set of beings who are much better calculated for more manly employments ; and, in particular, at a time when so many men are required in defence of their country. Besides, if there is not employment for the whole,

whole, and some must feel the inconveniences, are not men much better calculated to bear hardships than women? at least, is it not always supposed and considered by men, that women are not equal to any thing great, then surely they may be permitted to fill some inferior department in life, whereby, at least, they may be prevented from becoming burdensome, or pining away for want of real necessities? And, however shocking to the sympathising part of mankind may be the recital of these melancholy truths, yet the vast numbers of poor unhappy mothers and daughters, who are daily labouring under the weight of these cruel oppressions are innumerable. Nor is it possible for words to express, or pen to paint, the grief of one of these unhappy mothers, who, with her helpless children, is reduced to such extreme misery and want: can any thing be more distressful or pitiable!

O, that men would be wise unto salvation, and not prefer sordid gain to the more substantial happiness of conforming to the precepts of the Supreme Judge, who cannot deceive nor be deceived! namely "Whosoever shall



shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." A sentence one cannot think upon without horror, seeing so many little ones offended daily and hourly, and left helpless and forlorn in all the storms and trials of the world, to work their passage through mortality, still floating about, like a bubble upon the surface, in all the delicacy and softness of their sex, without money, friend, or prospect of any human comfort, or even relief, to enable them to drag on a miserable existence the ensuing day; surely, there is not any thing can equal the horrors of a state like this: yet what numbers experience it all, before they will condescend so low as to shrink from the paths of virtue. Surely this does not merit censure: yet, astonishing it is, the smallest feature of poverty is almost sure to be branded with the names of infamy and vice. What a trying situation after a life of affluence! yet, where is the mind of sensibility, under such circumstances as these, who would not feel it almost as great an affliction to discover their poverty

poverty as to sustain it; for, thus miserably situated, to have any of their former acquaintance witness their wretchedness, must be a very trying circumstance indeed, and especially since, by woeful experience, they are taught to know that little more than censure will be derived from it.

Indeed, amidst the great variety of complicated ills which are attendant upon all mankind, and from which not any are exempt, there will appear several in the world, the origin of whose woe is scarcely to be traced; and who, as a much admired author (Dr. Gregory) observes, will find none to compassionate, or even understand their sufferings: witness amongst the prodigious numbers of unhappy females in the married state, whom the adversity of fate has left alone to wander through all this labyrinth of difficulties, and, perhaps, surrounded by a numerous train of children, who alike must feel the supercilious sneers of taunt and reprobation, for they know not what. Indeed, this subject would alone open a very wide and dreary field to range in, so various and complicated are the calamities brought

brought upon mortals by the unseen hand of fate, to which all must submit, since it is not in the power of human skill to prevent: but all must allow, it is in the power of any one to moderate these afflictions by our best aid, or sympathy at least, instead of heightening the sorrows of this unfortunate and oppressed part of the community, and with that well-known philanthropist, *Goldsmith*, may we say, and firmly believe,

“ Every want that stimulates the breast,  
“ Becomes a source of pleasure when redress’d :

for what can add greater pleasure to the sensations of humanity, than to sympathise with the distressed? consequently to them I need not address this discourse, but chiefly to those whose feelings are less warmed by the misery of their fellow creatures, for a mixture of both sorts there is in the world, is beyond a doubt. Witness a paragraph I have this day, the 17th of August 1798, copied from a well-known daily paper, the *Morning Herald*, which runs exactly as follows:

“ Mr.

“ Mr. Editor,

“ My friend and self, a few days ago, having dined with an officer at his barracks, returned home between ten and eleven: in Panton-street we were accosted by an unfortunate woman, who first solicited our charity in English; but overhearing us, in our progress speak French, she renewed her suit in that language, probably thinking we might be foreigners, and therefore did not understand the nature of her first application. You will own, it is by no means astonishing, that hearing an English mendicant, *especially a female*, beg in different languages should excite our admiration, particularly as she spoke both fluently and elegantly, the evident result of a liberal education.

“ Under this idea, we listened to her petition delivered in French, which, being now so common an acquisition, made us desirous of knowing whether her learning was confined to that tongue only; my friend, therefore, replied to her in Italian, and we were not a little surprised to find her not only mistress of that language, but also well versed in Latin.

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“ Shocked

“ Shocked to discover such extensive learning in one who seemed to profit so little by its possession, and conceiving her an object of the greatest pity, probably abandoned by unfeeling, sordid relations, we delayed not instantly affording her some temporary relief; but in the moment of so doing, I was so unfortunate as to be recognized by my parents, who were returning from a friend’s house, where they had supped. In such a place, at such an hour, and with a female, what could be thought? We were immediately adjudged criminal; and, upon our joining them, were accordingly reproached, as if their suspicions had been true. Such is the power of prejudice, that it was in vain we protested our innocence, in vain we informed them of the nature of our conversation with this woman; these availed us nothing: we were not only censured for the immorality of the affair itself, but also despised for the meanness and vulgarity of our taste.

“ Unfortunately, what tends to confirm them in this their premature opinion, is the circumstance of my friend’s stepping aside immediately, on perceiving their approach. But

how



how easy is that accounted for? in such a situation, where all direct proof of the innocence of the individual is, by the peculiar nature of the circumstance, excluded, what avails, except to yourself, the conscious rectitude of the heart.

“*Mens sibi conscia recti?* It is impossible to impart to others the internal feelings, except by words; and when people are predetermined to disbelieve every syllable you urge in your own justification, how are you to effect your own exculpation? This action, therefore, of my friend is by no means a confirmation of our guilt, as it was extremely natural, that he should wish to avoid being seen in such a situation, in which appearances were so much against him. His motives being now explained, I beg leave for once to differ from that proverb, that *Innocence hath nothing to fear*.

“I am, Sir, yours, &c.

“W. R.”

A striking proof indeed, in addition to the many, that *unprotected* innocence has every

*human* thing to fear. But whose conduct of the four, think ye, was the most commendable, or pleasing in the sight of God or man?

Supposing, or even admitting, this poor unfortunate woman to be one of the wretched tribe, of whom we have been speaking. is it not evident, her education was not calculated either for beggary or vice? Nor can it be supposed, from the distress which always seems attendant upon this abject state of beggary alone, that it can be by choice preferred to some laudable and reputable employment. No : it is not in nature.

Then, in the name of reason, justice, and truth, permit me to ask, from whence originates, and what is it that countenances, the cause of all these evils? Are they incurable? Are not women, by nature, of a more gentle and delicate composition than men, and less able to bear the hardships which so frequently are forced upon them? Has it not, in all ages, been the task, or rather the avowed choice, of the male part of the creation, to protect and defend the weaker sex? and is not the male part of the creation better able to  
bear

bear cold, hunger, fatigue, and hardships than women are? Poor helpless women! who no sooner meet the heavy fate of indigence, than, from their appearance, they are bound to support a load of infamous censure along with it.

Although, at the same time, permit me to infer, there is not the least necessity for men to undergo the smallest part of these hardships, even had they relinquished their claim to women's occupations, since there is such a number of branches in trade, beside arts and sciences, which are only calculated for men. Surely, then, women ought to be permitted to occupy the remaining few, nor any longer suffered to be bound down by these oppressive chains; for, does not generous Pity demand a hearing in their behalf? Does not common decency forbid they should be insulted in the manner they are? Is it manly, is it noble, is it generous, or humane? Would not one think, from such oppressions, that men had determined to exert themselves for the misery and torture of their fellow-creatures.

I allow this kind of reasoning, to the interested parties, may sound rather grating to the ear: but, be it remembered, I have not undertaken the task of panegyric, but plain truth, which needs no high-flown language to express it: nor have I a wish to make an invidious remark upon the conduct or behaviour of any man, and much less to include a whole body of them. But what success in trade, if such they have, can make the smallest atonement, on a death-bed, or come nearly adequate to the loss of a poor soul, whom they may have been the means of casting into the utmost misery and distress, and forcing to seek an asylum in the jaws of perdition? Would but a mind, capable of the smallest feelings of humanity, reflect on the many sacrifices made to this voluptuous avarice, and, in time, spare themselves that pungent remorse due to such severe reflections.

But, says the reasonable enquirer, with regard to suppressing this ancient custom, which is pointed out as productive of so much evil, supposing an expedient is found out, will it not be attended with such a number of inconveniencies,

veniencies, as thereby to render the remedy as bad as the disease. To which I beg leave to reply : I do not presume to instruct the learned, but simply to communicate my ideas ; for, a complicated business like this, which has taken so deep root, requires a greater knowledge in human affairs to discuss than the writer is possessed of ; and a general knowledge of the causes which facilitate or obstruct the happiness of the community is absolutely requisite, which discovers the many convincing reasons why a business of so much consequence should be properly investigated ; and, upon these considerations, as all things, whether great or small, must have a beginning, I have taken some pains to be informed as to the nature of the subject. But as it is not expected a female can have much knowledge in judicature, I go upon the grounds of common sense and reason, and not actuated by any other motive than a wish to see happiness prevail, I shall accordingly beg leave to proceed to the following considerations ; for, as in the estimation and choice of things, it is always granted we are to prefer better to worse, and



such things as are grounded in reason, to others that hold no comparison therewith: we will, therefore, suppose the very worst supposition on which the argument can be founded, which is, What are this body of men to do, or how are they to be disposed of, if deprived of their present employment? Which may be briefly answered:

That although there may be some men, like women, of a timorous disposition, and thereby may experience some inconveniencies, yet it is not possible the whole body of them can suffer, by reason that, as I before observed, men can turn themselves so many ways in the world, which, were a woman to attempt, she would be pointed at as ridiculous and frantic: independent of which, after having stated the heavy grievances under which, not only the female part of the creation are oppressed, but the community in general, it may justly be replied, that no man, or body of men can, in reason, lay claim to a privilege that is absolutely repugnant to all civil society: after which, will not all other reasons appear to have little weight? In other cases, has it had any weight with

with the police of the country? How many repeated instances have we seen of men, and even bodies of men, who, by certain obligations, have been obliged to give up public or private property, when a general good could not be otherwise obtained?

Then, why is there any distinction to be made between relinquishing property and privilege, when the public good requires it, which in all exigencies must confessedly be just? for, if change of circumstances were to have no weight with the legislature in directing human affairs, what would the intercourse of mankind end in, but contention between private interest and public good? But so long as we are blessed with a happy constitution, and rulers possessing humanity united with wisdom, what have we to fear?

Were the desire of procuring liberty or happiness for this, or any other set of people, at the hazard of injuring the community, or any part of it, the request would not only be unreasonable but unjust: but after summing up, under each respective head, all the evidences I have collected, with a very gentle hint at the enormous

enormous expence, as well as danger, and other inconveniencies attending a continuance of this precedent, and considering the many great advantages which would accrue, not only to the community, but to themselves, by engaging in more manly employments, I shall leave the impartial reader to draw the conclusion, and rest the basis of my observations with those in power, for there are few, if any, precedents of arbitrary commitments, except the one in question, which have not come under the watchful eye of the legislature, whose vigilance and impartiality have, at all times, been a strong barrier and shield against any infringements upon the rights and privileges of the British nation; and, I presume, an invelligation into the grievances of these poor suffering females will quickly be a means of doing away the precedent of encouraging, or countenancing, effeminate tradesmen, which, it is evident, are not only the origin of such unheard of distresses to poor helpless females, and preventing parents, who may be desirous of breaking through the fashions of the times, from placing their daughters to trades, but

but is absolutely leading to the dissolution of all good government.

Nor is there the smallest danger, when once the business is commenced, that the deep penetration and humanity of the guardians of the common weal will ever be baffled in so laudable a pursuit. For, notwithstanding the subtlety of the enemy of mankind may invent a number of false and artful reasonings, yet what will all that avail, when the curtain is drawn aside, for then the spirit of justice and retribution is to be no longer appeased by such artifice; for neither law nor equity will admit of mending their fortunes by fraud or violence. And, although some of the offensive body may endeavour, by little artful chicanery, to gloss over their crimes, and endeavour to palliate them with idle excuses, yet the only real plea these oppressive traders can make, being that of private interest, as I before observed, it has at all times been judiciously ordered to be given up for a public good.

What can possibly be deemed a more efficacious good, than to relieve the oppressed, and preserve so many poor miserable souls from

from perdition. Yet it is greatly to be feared these considerations to men, who are grown torpid by custom, or blind by ignorance, will give but little room for reflection.

Have we not every reason to believe, to the disgrace of such part of the community as call themselves Christians, that there are some, though we will hope but a small part, whose hearts are too much contracted and bound down by avarice, to admit of any humane sensations, which, in a quarter of the globe, where the refinements of the age are cried up by all nations, is unaccountably strange; for, in a scrupulous search for facts, which confirms the writer's opinion on this subject, certain it is, there is not a single page in the New Testament which does not explicitly, or on the fairest inference, condemn such conduct, either by the example or precepts of Christ and his apostles.

Then, since these men have become apostates from Christianity, why any longer suffer their arbitrary power to be a subterfuge for fraud and oppression? Let the salutary laws of Great Britain provide means for suppressing  
a precedent,



a precedent, which, through time and unforeseen events, has become productive of so much mischief. Or let them appear and shew cause, why they are entitled to oppress these poor women, in order to enjoy indolence and ease. And let their claims to the flagrant violation of the rights of our fair countrywomen be developed.

Although, at the same time, permit me to infer, I cannot flatter myself these modes of proceeding are expected entirely to eradicate the sin against the seventh commandment. But, from the prodigious numbers, which are by compulsion driven to the paths of wickedness, will it not be a means of saving thousands of miserable creatures from sin and sorrow, and enable magistrates, and men in power, to exercise justice and authority over the wicked, without fear of punishing the innocent with the guilty? for, believe me, it is not the incorrigible sinner I take upon me to commiserate, but the encouraged, or rather the compelled, sinner; and still more those who suffer in innocence, which is the hapless, wretched fate of thousands. And although I cannot recal

to my memory the trifling observations I have made on this occasion, I am conscious they are my real sentiments; and flatter myself, however bad the composition, the design will be adopted by the generous and humane; when there is not a doubt, but the heavy burden, which these children of misery have so long supported, will quickly be thrown off, and the stumbling block to virtue and happiness be rolled away.

Have we not had sufficient proofs, that the happiness and welfare of mortals have at all times been thought worthy the attention of a Briton. Witness the poor slaves; what exertions have not been used by the humane friends of liberty in their behalf? Yet less, much less, are their sufferings to be lamented than the poor females I speak of, who have been bred up and educated in the school of Christianity, and fostered by the tender hand of Care.

The slave is little acquainted with the severe pangs a virtuous mind labours under, when driven to the extreme necessity of forfeiting their virtue for bread. The slave cannot feel pain at the loss of reputation, a term of  
which

which they never heard, and much less know the meaning. What are the untutored, wild imaginations of a slave, when put in the balance with the distressing sensations of a British female, who has received a refined, if not a classical, education, and is capable of the finest feelings the human heart is susceptible of. A slave, through want of education, has little more refinement than cattle in the field; nor can they know the want of what they never enjoyed, or were taught to expect; but a poor female, who has received the best instruction, and is endowed with a good understanding, what must not she feel in mind, independent of her corporeal wants, after the adversity of fate has set her up as a mark, for the ridicule, the censure, and contempt of the world? Her feelings cannot be described, nor her sufferings sufficiently lamented.

I recollect some observations, made some years ago, by a late honourable, humane, learned, and truly worthy member of the House of Commons\*, respecting the business

\* Mr. Burke.

of the slave-trade, which doubly confirms my opinion of the great necessity there is for an investigation into the grievances I have been speaking of, since it leads to a clear demonstration, that the most judicious and benevolent may still remain in the dark, as to the sufferings of our Christian slaves at home.

“There is,” said the honourable gentleman, “no state in human nature but had its compensations. What was a slave? a happy slave was a degraded man; his happiness consisted in having no thought of the past, or the future, and this deficiency of mind it was which lessened the dignity of man, and conferred happiness on the African.”

A very striking and just observation, with regard to the African, it must be granted; yet I cannot but differ in opinion, when it is said, that all mankind are capable of a compensation. For, admitting the same mode of reasoning to stand good, if the oppressions of one part of the creation are moderated through their ignorance, how much must the other be heightened by their sensibility and the refinements of education. Nor can I see the small-

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est trait of compensation remaining for these miserable females, since the very education they have received in youth, redounds to their misfortunes in maturity.

Then, if an investigation into the business of the slave-trade has been founded on such humane and generous principles, how much greater pleasure must it give the feeling heart, to patronize the poor, unfortunate women of our own nation, who labour under the very worst kind of slavery, and must continue to languish under the fetters of a painful bondage, till death, or the kindly hand of interference, has severed the chain?

But the justice of retribution taking place, shall we not see these poor, helpless, and forlorn women set on a level with their fellow-creatures, and not be under the shocking and cruel necessity of starving in a land of plenty? And when the face of sorrow is enlivened with the smile of happiness and content, and the weary tradesman can lie down in peace, without fear or danger of being annoyed, by the lawless plunderer; when all are united in the bands of mutual benefit and preservation, and



the memory of former woes is lost in the blessings of a future age ; it is then we may reasonably expect, that less than half the immense sums which are now required, will be sufficient to encourage honest industry.

But to detail the extent of human woes in so small a compass is impossible, so various and so fluctuating are the events of human life, and its ills so numerous : so many sudden deaths, losses in trade, and other casualties daily happen within our knowledge, the bare recital of which is not only painful to the narrator, but revives the melancholy tale of woe in the ears of the suffering parties ; therefore, as the fate of an unknown individual seems so much on a par with the rest of mankind, permit the foregoing pages to suffice ; and, instead of adding the distressing history of the unfortunate Mrs —, the writer begs leave to introduce the story of Fidelia, which being picturesque, and well adapted to the design, by permission, may serve as a kind of back-ground to the piece, without wounding again the heart of sensibility, by the recital of past misfortunes.

THE

## THE STORY

OF

## FIDELIA.

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**SAYS FIDELIA\***, I shall make no apology for the trouble I am about to give you, since I am sure the motives that induce me to give it will have as much weight with you as they have with me; I shall, therefore, without farther preface, relate to you the events of a life, which, however insignificant and unentertaining, affords a lesson of the highest importance; a lesson, the value of which I have experienced, and may therefore recommend.

I am the daughter of a gentleman of good family, who, as he was a younger brother, purchased, with the portion that was allotted him, a genteel post under government. My mother died when I was but twelve years

\* The story of Fidelia made its first appearance in the *Adventurer*, No. 77, 78, 79.

old, and my father, who was excessively fond of me, determined to be himself my preceptor, and to take care that my natural genius, which his partiality made him think above the common rank, should not want the improvements of a liberal education.

He was a man of sense, with a tolerable share of learning. In his youth he had been a free liver, and, perhaps, for that reason took some pains to become a free thinker. But whatever fashionable frailties he might formerly have allowed in himself, he was now in advanced life, and had, at least, worldly wisdom enough to know, that it was necessary his daughter should be restrained from those liberties, which he had looked upon as trifling errors in his own conduct. He therefore laboured with great application to inculcate in me the love of order, the beauty of moral rectitude, and the happiness and self-reward of virtue; but, at the same time, professed it his design to free my mind from vulgar prejudices and superstition, for so he called revealed religion. As I was urged to chuse virtue and reject vice, from motives which had no necessary

sary connection with immortality, I was not led to consider a future state either with hope or fear. My father, indeed, when I urged him upon that subject, always intimated that the doctrine of immortality, whether true or false, ought not at all to influence my conduct, or interrupt my peace; because the virtue which secured happiness in the present state, would also secure it in a future state: a future state, therefore, I wholly disregarded, and, to confess the truth, disbelieved: for I thought I could plainly discover, that it was disbelieved by my father, though he had not thought fit explicitly to declare his sentiments. As I had no very turbulent passions, a ductile and good disposition, and the highest reverence for his understanding, as well as the tenderest affection for him, he found it an easy task to make me adopt every sentiment and opinion which he proposed to me, as his own, especially as he took care to support his principles by the authority and arguments of the best writers against Christianity.

At the age of twenty, I was called upon to make use of all the philosophy I had been

taught, by his death; which not only deprived me of a parent I most ardently loved, but with him of all the ease and affluence to which I had been accustomed. His income was only for life, and he had rather lived beyond than within it; consequently, there was nothing left for me, but the pride and helplessness of genteel life, a taste for every thing elegant, and a delicacy and sensibility that has doubled my sufferings. In this distress, a brother of my mother's, who was grown rich in trade, received me into his house, and declared he would take the same care of me as if I had been his own. When the first transports of my grief were abated, I found myself in an easy situation, and from the natural cheerfulness of my temper, I was beginning once more to taste of happiness. My uncle, who was a man of narrow understanding and illiberal education, was a little disgusted with me for employing so much of my time in reading; but still more so, when happening to examine my books, he found, by the titles, that some of them were what he called blasphemy, and tended, as he imagined, to make

me



me an atheist. I endeavoured to explain my principles, which I thought beneath the dignity of virtue to disguise or disavow ; but as I never could make him conceive any difference between a deist and an atheist, my arguments only served to confirm him in the opinion, that I was a wicked wretch, who, in his own phrase, believed neither God nor devil. As he was really a good man, and heartily zealous for the established faith, though more from habit and prejudice than reason, my errors gave him great affliction. I perceived it with the utmost concern ; I perceived too, that he looked upon me with a degree of abhorrence mixed with pity, and that I was wholly indebted to his good nature for that protection, which I had flattered myself I should owe to his love. I comforted myself, however, with my own integrity, and even felt a conscious pride, in suffering this persecution from ignorance and folly, only because I was superior to vulgar errors and popular superstition. And that Christianity deserved these appellations, I was not more convinced by my father's arguments, than my uncle's

conduct, who, as his zeal was not according to knowledge, was by no means qualified to "adorn the doctrine which he professed to believe."

I had lived a few months under the painful sensibility of receiving continual benefits from a person whose esteem and affection I had lost, when my uncle one day came into my chamber, and after preparing me for some unexpected good fortune, told me, he had just had a proposal of marriage for me, from a man to whom I could not possibly have any objection. He then named a merchant with whom I had often been in company at his table. As the man was neither old nor ugly, had a large fortune, and a fair character, my uncle thought himself sufficiently authorised to pronounce as he did, that I could not possibly have any objection to him. An objection, however, I had, which I told my uncle was to me insuperable; it was, that the person whom he proposed to me as the companion, the guide, and director of my whole life, to whom I was to vow, not only obedience, but love, had nothing in him that could ever en-

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gage my affection: his understanding was low, his sentiments mean and indelicate, and his manner unpolite and unpleasing. "What stuff is all this?" interrupted my uncle, "sentiments indelicate, unpolite, his understanding forsooth, not equal to your own! Ah! child, if you had less romance, conceit, and arrogance, and more true discretion and prudence, it would do you more good than all the fine books you have confounded your poor head with, and, what is worse, perhaps, ruined your poor soul. I own it went a little against my conscience to accept my honest friend's kind offer, and give him such a pagan for a wife. But I know not, whether the believing husband may not convert the unbelieving wife? As to your flighty objections, they are such nonsense, that I wonder you can suppose me fool enough to be deceived by them. No, child, wife as you are, you cannot impose upon a man who has lived as many years in the world as I have. I see your motive; you have some infidel libertine rake in your eye, with whom you would go headlong to perdition. But I shall take care to have  
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your soul to answer for, as well as your person. Either I shall dispose of you to an honest man that may convert you, or you shall dispose of yourself how you please for me; for I disclaim all farther care or trouble about you. So I leave you to consider, whether or no the kindness I have shewn you, entitles me to some little influence over you, and whether you chuse to seek protection where you can find it, or accept of the happy lot Providence has cut out for you."

He left me at the close of this fine harangue, and I seriously set myself to consider, as he bade me, which of the two states he had set before me, I ought to chuse.—To submit to a legal sort of prostitution, with the additional weight of perjury on my conscience, or to expose myself to all the distress of friendless poverty and unprotected youth. After some hours of deliberation, I determined on the latter, and that more from principle than inclination; for, though my delicacy would have suffered extremely in accepting a husband, at least indifferent to me, yet as my heart was perfectly disengaged, and my tem-

per naturally easy, I thought I could have been less unhappy in following my uncle's advice than I might probably be by rejecting it. But then I must have submitted to an action I could not think justifiable, in order to avoid mere external distresses. This would not have been philosophical. I had always been taught, that virtue was of itself sufficient to happiness; and that those things which are generally esteemed evils, could have no power to disturb the felicity of a mind governed by the eternal rule of right, and truly enamoured of the charms of moral beauty, I resolved, therefore, to run all risks, rather than depart from this glorious principle. I felt myself raised by the trial, and exulted in the opportunity of shewing my contempt of the smiles or frowns of fortune, and of proving the power of virtue to sustain the soul under all accidental circumstances of distress.

I communicated my resolution to my uncle, assuring him at the same time of my everlasting gratitude and respect, and that nothing should have induced me to offend or disobey him, but his requiring me to do what my reason



son and conscience disapproved; that supposing the advantages of riches to be really as great as he believed, yet still those of virtue were greater, and I could not resolve to purchase the one by a violation of the other; that a false vow was certainly criminal; and that it would be doing an act of the highest injustice, to enter into so solemn an engagement without the power of fulfilling it; that my affections did not depend on my own will; and that no man should possess my person, who could not obtain the first place in my heart.

I was surprised that my uncle's impatience had permitted me to go on thus far; but looking in his face, I perceived that passion had kept him silent. At length the gathering storm burst over my head in a torrent of reproaches; my reasons were condemned as romantic absurdities, which I could not myself believe. I was accused of designing to deceive, and to throw myself away on some worthless fellow, whose principles were as bad as my own. It was in vain for me to assert, that I had no such design, nor any inclination to marry at all. My uncle could sooner have believed the grossest  
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contradiction, than that a young woman could so strenuously refuse one man, without being prepossessed in favour of another. As I thought myself injured by his accusations and tyranny, I gave over the attempt to mitigate his anger. He appealed to Heaven for the justice of his resentment, and against my ingratitude and rebellion; and then giving me a note of fifty pounds, which he said would keep me from immediate indigence, he bade me leave his house, and see his face no more. I bowed in sign of obedience, and collecting all my dignity and resolution, I arose, thanked him for his past benefits, and, with a low curtsy, left the room.

In less than an hour, I departed, with my little wardrobe, to the house of a person who had formerly been my father's servant, and who now kept a shop and let lodgings. From thence I went the next day to visit my father's nephew, who was in possession of the family estate, and had lately married a lady of great fortune. He was a young gentleman of good parts, his principles the same as my father's, though his practice had not been quite agreeable

agreeable to the strict rules of morality. However, setting aside a few of those vices which are looked upon as genteel accomplishments in young fellows of fortune, I thought him a good sort of man; and, as we had always lived in great kindness, I doubted not that I should find him my friend, and meet with approbation and encouragement, at least, if not assistance, from him. I told him my story, and the reasons that had determined me to the refusal that had incurred my uncle's displeasure; but how was I disappointed, when, instead of the applause I expected for my heroic virtue and unmerited persecutions, I perceived a smile of contempt on his face, when he interrupted me in the following manner:

“And what in the devil's name, my dear cousin, could make a woman of your sense behave so like an idiot? What! forfeit all your hopes from your uncle, refuse an excellent match, and reduce yourself to beggary, because, truly, you were not in love? Surely one might have expected better from you even at fifteen. Who is it, pray, that marries the person of their choice? For my own part, who  
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have rather a better title to please myself, with a good fifteen hundred a year, than you who have not a shilling, I found it would not do; and that there was something more to be sought after in a wife, than a pretty face or a genius. Do you think I cared three farthings for the woman I married?—No, faith; but her thirty thousand pounds were worth having; with that I can purchase a seraglio of beauties, and indulge my taste in every kind of pleasure. And, pray, what is it to me, whether my wife has beauty, or wit, or elegance, when her money will supply me with all that in others? You, cousin, had an opportunity of being as happy as I am. The men, believe me, would not like you a bit the worse for being married; on the contrary, you would find, that for one who took notice of you as a single woman, twenty would be your admirers and humble servants, when there was no danger of being taken in: thus you might have gratified all your passions, made an elegant figure in life, and have chosen out some gentle swain, as romantic and poetical as you pleased, for your cecisbeo.

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The good John Trot husband would have been easily managed."

My indignation could be contained no longer, and I was leaving the room in disdain, when he caught me by the hand. "Nay, prithee, my dear cousin, none of these violent airs: I thought you and I had known one another better. Let the poor souls who are taught by the priests and their nurses to be afraid of hell-fire, and to think they shall go to the devil for following nature, and making life agreeable, be as outrageously virtuous as they please, you have too much sense to be frightened at bugbears. You know that the term of our existence is but short, and it is highly reasonable to make it as pleasant as possible."

I was too angry to attempt confuting his arguments; but, bursting from his hold, told him, I would take care not to give him a second opportunity of insulting my distress, and affronting my understanding; and so left his house with a resolution never to enter it again.

I went home mortified and disappointed; my spirits sunk into a dejection which took from me, for many days, all inclination to

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stir out of my lodging, or to see a human face. At length I resolved to try whether indigence and friendship were really incompatible, and whether I should meet with the same treatment from a female friend, whose affection had been the principal pleasure of my youth. Surely, thought I, the gentle Amanda, whose heart seems capable of every tender and generous sentiment, will do justice to the innocence and integrity of her unfortunate friend; her tenderness will encourage my virtue, and animate my fortitude; her praises and endearments will compensate all my hardships. Amanda was a single woman, of a moderate independent fortune, which I heard she was going to bestow on a young officer, who had little or nothing besides his commission. I had no doubt of her approbation of my refusing a mercenary match, since she herself had chosen from motives so opposite to those which are called prudent. She had been in the country some months, so that my misfortunes had not reached her ear, till I myself related them to her.

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She heard me with great attention, and answered with politeness enough, but with a coldness that chilled my very heart.

"You are sensible, my dear Fidelia," said she, "that I never pretended to set my understanding in competition with yours. I know my own inferiority, and though many of your notions and opinions appeared to me very strange and particular, I never attempted to dispute them with you. To be sure, you know best: but it seems to me a very odd conduct, for one in your situation to give offence to so good an uncle; first, by maintaining doctrines which may be very true for ought I know, but which are very contrary to the received opinions we are brought up in, and therefore are apt to shock a common understanding; and secondly, to renounce his protection, and throw yourself into the wide world, rather than marry the man he chose for you; to whom, after all, I do not find you had any real objection, nor any antipathy for his person."

"Antipathy, my dear," said I, "are there not many degrees between loving and honouring

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ing a man preferably to all others, and beholding him with abhorrence and aversion. The first is, in my opinion, the duty of a wife, a duty voluntarily taken upon herself, and engaged in under the most solemn contract. As to the difficulties that may attend my friendless, unprovided state, since they are the consequences of a virtuous action, they cannot really be evils, nor can they disturb that happiness which is the gift of virtue."—"I am heartily glad," answered she, "that you have found out the art of making yourself happy by the force of imagination. I wish your enthusiasm may continue, and that you may still be farther convinced, by your own experience, of the folly of mankind, in supposing poverty and disgrace to be evils."

I was cut to the soul by the unkind manner which accompanied this sarcasm, and was going to remonstrate against her unfriendly treatment, when her lover came in, with another gentleman, who, in spite of my full heart, engaged my attention, and, for a while, made me forget the stings of unkindness. The beauty and gracefulness of his person caught

my eye, and the politeness of his address, and the elegance of his compliments, soon prejudiced me in favour of his understanding. He was introduced by the captain to Amanda as his most intimate friend, and seemed desirous to give credit to his friend's judgment, by making himself as agreeable as possible. He succeeded so well, that Amanda was wholly engrossed by the pleasure of his conversation, and the care of entertaining her lover and her new guest. Her face brightened and her good humour returned. When I arose to leave her, she pressed me so earnestly to stay dinner, that I could not, without discovering how much I resented her behaviour, refuse. This, however, I should probably have done, as I was naturally disposed to shew every sentiment of my heart, had not a secret wish arisen there to know a little more of this agreeable stranger. This inclined me to think it prudent to conceal my resentment, and to accept the civilities of Amanda. The conversation grew more and more pleasing; I took my share in it; and had more than my share of the charming stranger's notice and attention. As we all grew  
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more and more unreserved, Amanda dropped hints in the course of the conversation relating to my story, my sentiments, and unhappy situation. Sir George Freeloze, for that was the young gentleman's name, listened greedily to all that was said of me, and seemed to eye me with an earnest curiosity, as well as admiration. We did not part till it was late; and Sir George insisted on attending me to my lodgings. I strongly refused it, not without a sensation, which more properly belonged to the female than the philosopher, and which I condemned in myself, as arising from dishonest pride.

I could not, without pain, suffer the polite Sir George, upon so short an acquaintance, to discover the meanness of my abode. To avoid this, I sent for a chair, but was confused to find that Sir George and his servants prepared to attend it on foot, by way of guard. It was in vain to dispute: he himself walked before, and his servants followed it. I was covered with blushes, when, after all this parade, he handed me in at the little shop door, and took leave with as profound respect, as if



he had guarded me into a palace. A thousand different thoughts kept me from closing my eyes that night. The behaviour of Amanda wounded me to the soul: I found that I must look on her as no more than a common acquaintance, and that the world did not contain one person whom I could call my friend. My heart felt desolate and forlorn. I knew not what course to take for my future subsistence. The pain which my pride had just given me, convinced me that I was far from having conquered the passions of humanity, and that I should feel too sensibly all the mortifications which attend on poverty. I determined, however, to subdue this pride, and call to my assistance the example of ancient sages and philosophers, who despised riches and honours, and felt no inconveniencies from the malice of fortune. I had almost reasoned myself into a contempt for the world, and fancied myself superior to its smiles or frowns, when the idea of Sir George Freelove rushed upon my mind, and destroyed, at once, the whole force of my reasoning. I found that, however I might disregard the rest of the world,

world, I could not be indiffernt to his opinion ; and the thought of being despised by him was insupportable. I recollected that my condition was extremely different from that of an old philosopher, whose rags, perhaps, were the means of gratifying his pride, by attracting the notice and respect of mankind ; at least, the philosopher's schemes and wishes were very different from those which, at that time, were taking possession of my heart. The looks and behaviour of Sir George, left me no doubt, that I had made as deep an impression in his favour as he had done in mine. I could not bear to lose the ground I had gained, and to throw myself into a state below his notice. I scorned the thought of imposing on him with regard to my circumstances, in case he should really have had favourable intentions for me ; yet to disgrace myself for ever in his eye, by submitting to servitude, or any low way of supporting myself, was what I could not bring myself to resolve on.

In the midst of these reflections, I was surprised, the next morning, by a visit from Sir George. He made respectful apologies for

the liberty he took ; told me he had learned from my friend, that the unkindness and tyranny of an uncle had cast me into uneasy circumstances ; and that he could not know that so much beauty and merit were so unworthily treated by fortune, without earnestly wishing to be the instrument of doing me more justice. He entreated me to add dignity and value to his life, by making it conducive to the happiness of mine ; and was going on with the most fervent offers of service, when I interrupted him, by saying that there was nothing in his power that I could with honour accept, by which my life could be made happier, but that respect which was due to me as a woman and a gentlewoman, and which ought to have prevented such offers of service from a stranger, as could only be justified by a long-experienced friendship ; that I was not in a situation to receive visits, and must decline his acquaintance, which, nevertheless, in a happier part of my life would have given me pleasure. He now had recourse to all the arts of his sex, imputing his too great freedom to the force of his passion, protesting the most inviolable respect,

respect, and imploring on his knees, and even with tears, that I would not punish him so severely, as to deny him the liberty of seeing me, and making himself more and more worthy of my esteem. My weak heart was but too much touched by his artifices, and I had only just fortitude enough to persevere in refusing his visits, and to insist on his leaving me, which at last he did; but with such a profusion of tenderness, prayers, and protestations, that it was some time before I could recal my reason enough to reflect on the whole of his behaviour, and on my own situation, which compared, left me but little doubt of his dishonourable views.

I determined never more to admit him to my presence, and accordingly gave orders to be denied, if he came again. My reason applauded, but my heart reproached me, and heavily repined at the rigid determination of prudence. I knew that I acted rightly, and I expected that that consciousness would make me happy; but I found it otherwise, I was wretched beyond what I had ever felt, or formed any idea of. I discovered that my  
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heart was entangled in a passion which must for ever be combated, or indulged at the expence of virtue. I now considered riches as truly desirable, since they would have placed me above disgraceful attempts, and given me reasonable hopes of becoming the wife of Sir George Freelove. I was discontented and unhappy, but surprised and disappointed to find myself so, since hitherto I had no one criminal action to reproach myself with; on the contrary, my difficulties were all owing to my regard for virtue.

I resolved, however, to try still farther the power of virtue to confer happiness, to go on in my obedience to her laws, and patiently wait the good effects of it. But I had stronger difficulties to go through than any I had yet experienced: Sir George was too much practised in the arts of seduction to be discouraged by a first repulse, every day produced either some new attempt to see me, or a letter full of the most passionate protestations and entreaties for pardon and favour: it was in vain I gave orders that no more letters should be taken in from him; he had so many different



different contrivances to convey them, and directed them in hands so unlike, that I was surpris'd into reading them, contrary to my intentions. Every time I stirr'd out, he was sure to be in my way, and to employ the most artful tongue that ever ensnared the heart of woman, in blinding my reason and awakening my passions.

My virtue, however, did not yet give way, but my peace of mind was utterly destroyed. Whenever I was with him, I summon'd all my fortitude, and constantly repeated my commands, that he should avoid me: his disobedience call'd for my resentment, and, in spite of my melting heart, I arm'd my eyes with anger, and treated him with as much disdain as I thought his unworthy designs deserved. But the moment he left me, all my resolution forsook me, I repin'd at my fate, I even murmur'd against the Sovereign Ruler of all things, for making me subject to passions I could not subdue, yet must not indulge. I compar'd my own situation with that of my libertine cousin, whose pernicious arguments I had heard with horror

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and detestation; who gave the reins to every desire; whose house was the seat of plenty, mirth, and delight; whose face was ever covered with smiles; and whose heart seemed free from sorrow and care. Is not this man, said I, happier than I am? and if so, where is the worth of virtue? Have I not sacrificed to her my fortune and my friends? Do I not daily sacrifice to her my darling inclination; yet, what is the compensation she offers me? What are my prospects in this world but poverty, mortification, disappointment, and grief? Every wish of my heart denied, every passion of humanity combated and hurt, though never conquered! Are these the blessings with which Heaven distinguishes its favourites? Can the King of Heaven want power or will to distinguish them? or does he leave his wretched creatures the sport of chance, the prey of wickedness and malice? Surely no. Yet is not the condition of the virtuous often more miserable than that of the vicious? I myself have experienced that it is. I am very unhappy, and see no likelihood of my being otherwise in this world—and all beyond  
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the grave is eternal darkness. Yet why do I say that I have no prospect of happiness? does not the most engaging of men offer me all the joys that love and fortune can bestow? Will not he protect me from every insult of the proud world that scoffs at indigence? Will not his liberal hand pour forth the means of every pleasure, even of that highest and truest of all pleasure, the power of relieving the sufferings of my fellow-creatures, of changing the tears of distress into tears of joy and gratitude, of communicating my own happiness to all around me? Is not this a state far preferable to that in which virtue has placed me? But what is virtue? Is not happiness the laudable pursuit of reason? Is it not then laudable to pursue it by the most probable means? Have I not been accusing Providence of unkindness, whilst I myself only am in fault for rejecting its offered favours? Surely, I have mistaken the path of virtue: it must be that which leads to happiness. The path which I am in is full of thorns and briars, and terminates in impenetrable darkness; but I see another that is strewed with flowers, and bright  
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with the sun-shine of prosperity: this, surely, is the path of virtue and the road to happiness. Hither then let me turn my weary steps, nor let vain and idle prejudices fright me from felicity. It is surely impossible that I should offend God, by yielding to a temptation which he has given me no motive to resist. He has allotted me a short and precarious existence, and has placed before me good and evil. What is good but pleasure? What is evil but pain? Reason and nature direct me to chuse the first, and avoid the last. I sought for happiness in what is called virtue, but I found it not: shall I not try the other experiment, since I think I can hardly be more unhappy by following inclination, than I am by denying it?

Thus had my frail thoughts wandered into a wilderness of error, and thus had I almost reasoned myself out of every principle of morality, by pursuing, through all their consequences, the doctrines which had been taught me as rules of life and prescriptions for felicity, the talismans of truth, by which I should be secured in the storms of adversity, and listen without danger to the siren of temptation; when,

when, in the fatal hour of my presumption, sitting alone in my chamber, collecting arguments on the side of passion, almost distracted with doubts, and plunging deeper and deeper into falsehood, I saw Sir George Freelove at my feet, who had gained admittance, contrary to my orders, by corrupting my landlady. It is not necessary to describe to you his arts, or the weak effects of that virtue which had been graciously implanted in my heart, but which I had taken impious means to undermine by false reasoning, and which now tottered from the foundation: suffice it that I submitted to the humiliation I have so well deserved, and tell you, that, in the pride of human reason I dared to condemn, as the effect of weakness and prejudice, the still voice of conscience, which would yet have warned me from ruin; that my innocence, my honour was the sacrifice to passion and sophistry; that my boasted philosophy, and too much flattered understanding, preserved me not from the lowest depth of infamy, which the weakest of my sex with humility and religion would have avoided.

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I now experienced a new kind of wretchedness: my vile seducer tried in vain to reconcile me to the shameful life to which he had reduced me, by loading me with finery, and lavishing his fortune in procuring me pleasures which I could not taste, and pomp which seemed an insult on my disgrace. In vain did I recollect the arguments which had convinced me of the lawfulness of accepting offered pleasures, and following the dictates of inclination. The light of my understanding was darkened, but the sense of guilt was not lost: my pride and my delicacy, if, criminal as I was, I may dare to call it so, suffered the most intolerable mortification and disgust every time I reflected on my infamous situation. Every eye seemed to upbraid me, even that of my triumphant seducer. O depth of misery! to be conscious of deserving the contempt of him I loved, and for whose sake I was become contemptible to myself.

This was the state of my mind during a year which I passed in Sir George's house: his fondness was unabated for eight months of the time; and as I had no other object to share

share my attention, neither friend nor relation to call off any part of my tenderness, all the love of a heart naturally affectionate centered in him. The first dawnings of unkindness were but too visible to my watchful eyes. I had now all the torments of jealousy to endure, till a cruel certainty put an end to them; I learnt, at length, that my false lover was on the brink of marriage with a lady of great fortune. I immediately resolved to leave him, but could not do it without first venting my full heart in complaints and reproaches. This provoked his rage, and drew on me insolence, which, though I had deserved, I had not learnt to bear. I returned with scorn, which no longer became me, all the wages of my sin, and the trappings of my shame, and left his house in the bitterest anguish of resentment and despair.

I returned to my old lodgings; but unable to bear a scene which recalled every circumstance of my undoing, ashamed to look in the face of any creature who had seen me innocent, wretched in myself, and hoping from change of place some abatement of my misery, I put

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myself into a post-chaise at two in the morning, with orders to the driver to carry me as far from town as he could before the return of night, leaving it to him to chuse the road.

My reason and my senses seemed benumbed and stupified during my journey. I made no reflections on what I was about, nor formed any design for my future life. When night came, my conductor would have stopped at a large town, but I bid him go on to the next village: there I alighted at a paltry inn, and dismissed my vehicle, without once considering what I was to do with myself, or why I chose that place for my abode. To say truth, I can give no account of my thoughts at this period of time: they were all confused and distracted. A short frenzy must have filled up those hours, of which my memory retains such imperfect traces. I remember only, that without having pulled off my clothes, I left the inn as soon as I saw the day, and wandered out of the village.

My unguided feet carried me to a range of willows by a river's side, where, after having walked some time, the freshness of the air revived

vived my senses, and awakened my reason. My reason, my memory, my anguish, and despair returned together. Every circumstance of my past life was present to my mind; but most the idea of my faithless lover, and my criminal love tortured my imagination and rent my bleeding heart, which, in spite of all its guilt and all its wrongs, retained the tenderest and most ardent affection for its undoer. This unguarded affection, which was the effect of a gentle and kind nature, heightened the anguish of resentment, and compleated my misery. In vain did I call off my thoughts from this gloomy retrospect, and hope to find a gleam of comfort in my future prospects. They were still more dreadful: poverty, attended by infamy, and want groaning under the cruel hand of oppression, and the taunts of insolence were before my eyes. I, who had once been the darling and the pride of indulgent parents, who had once been beloved, respected, and admired, was now the outcast of human nature; despised and avoided by all who had ever loved me, by all whom I had most loved!

hateful to myself, belonging to no one, exposed to wrongs and insults from all.

I tried to find out the cause of this dismal change, and how far I was myself the occasion of it. My conduct, with regard to Sir George, though I spontaneously condemned, yet, upon recollection, I thought the arguments which produced it would justify. But as my principles could not preserve me from vice, neither could they sustain me in adversity : conscience was not to be perverted by the sophistry which had beclouded my reason. And if any, by imputing my conduct to error, should acquit me of guilt, let them remember, it is yet true, that in this uttermost distress, I was neither sustained by the consciousness of innocence, the exultation of virtue, nor the hope of reward : whether I looked backward or forward, all was confusion and anguish, distraction and despair. I accused the Supreme Being of cruelty and injustice, who, though he gave me not sufficient encouragement to resist desire, yet punishes me with the consequences of indulgence. If there is a God, cried I.

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he must be either tyrannical and cruel, or regardless of her creatures. I will no longer endure a being which is undeservedly miserable, either from chance or design, but fly to that annihilation in which all my prospects terminate. Take back, said I, lifting my eyes to Heaven, the hateful gift of existence, and let my dust no more be animated to suffering, and exalted to misery.

So saying, I ran to the brink of the river, and was going to plunge in, when the cry of some person very near me made me turn my eyes to see whence it came. I was accosted by an elderly gentleman, who, with looks of terror, pity, and benevolence, asked what I was about to do? At first I was sullen, and refused to answer him: but by degrees the compassion he shewed, and the tenderness with which he treated me, softened my heart, and gave vent to my tears.

"O, Madam!" said he, "these are gracious signs, and unlike those which first drew my attention, and made me watch you unobserved, fearing some fatal purpose in your mind. What must be the thoughts which could make

a face like yours appear the picture of horror? I was taking my morning walk, and have seen you a considerable time: sometimes stopping and wringing your hands, sometimes quickening your pace, and sometimes walking slow, with your eyes fixed on the ground, till you raised them to Heaven, with looks not of supplication and piety, but rather of accusation and defiance. For pity tell me, how it is that you have quarrelled with yourself, with life, nay even with Heaven? Recal your reason and your hope, and let this seasonable prevention of your fatal purpose be an earnest to you of good things to come, of God's mercy not yet alienated from you, and stooping from his throne to save your soul from perdition?"

The tears which flowed in rivers from my eyes while he talked, gave me so much relief, that I found myself able to speak, and desirous to express my gratitude for the good man's concern for me. It was so long since I had known the joys of confidence, that I felt surprising pleasure and comfort from unburdening my heart, and telling my kind deliverer every circumstance of my story, and  
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every thought of my distracted mind. He shuddered to hear me upbraid the Divine Providence, and stopping me short, told me he would lead me to one who should preach patience to me whilst she gave me the example of it.

As we talked he lead me to his own house, and there introduced me to his wife, a middle-aged woman, pale and emaciated, but of a cheerful placid countenance, who received me with the greatest tenderness and humanity. She saw I was distressed, and her compassion was before hand with my complaints. Her tears stood ready to accompany mine; her looks and her voice expressed the kindest concern; and her assiduous cares demonstrated that true politeness and hospitality, which is not the effect of art but of inward benevolence. While she obliged me to take some refreshment, her husband gave her a short account of my story, and of the state in which he found me. "This poor lady," said he, "from the fault of her education and principles, sees every thing through a gloomy medium. She accuses Providence, and hates her existence

for those evils which are the common lot of mankind in this short state of trial. You, my dear, who are one of the greatest sufferers I have known, are best qualified to cure her of her faulty impatience, and to convince her, by your own example, that this world is not the place in which virtue is to find its reward. She thinks no one so unhappy as herself; but if she knew all that you have gone through, she would surely be sensible, that if you are happier than she, it is only because your principles are better."

"Indeed, my dear madam!" said she, "that is the only advantage that I have over you; but that indeed outweighs every thing else. It is now but ten days since I followed to the grave my only son, the survivor of eight children, who were all equally the objects of my fondest love: my heart is no less tender than your own, nor my affections less warm. For a whole year before the death of my last darling, I watched the fatal progress of his disease, and saw him suffer the most amazing pains. Nor was poverty, that dreaded evil, to which you could not submit, wanting to my trials:

trials : though my husband is, by his profession, a gentleman, his income is so small, that I and my children have often wanted necessaries : and though I had always a weakly constitution, I have helped to support my family by the labour of my own hands. At this time I am consuming, by daily tortures, with a cancer, which must shortly be my death. My pains, perhaps, might be mitigated by proper assistance, though nothing could preserve my life ; but I have not the means to obtain that assistance." O, hold ! interrupted I, my soul is shocked at the enumeration of such intolerable sufferings : how is it that you support them ? Why do I not see you, in despair like mine, renounce your existence, and put yourself out of the reach of torment ? But, above all, tell me how it is possible for you to preserve, amidst such complicated misery, that appearance of cheerfulness and serene complacency which shines so remarkably in your countenance, and animates every look and motion.

"That cheerfulness and complacency," answered the good woman, "I feel in my heart.

My



My mind is not only serene, but often experiences the highest emotions of joy and exultation, that the brightest hopes can give." And whence, said I, do you derive this astonishing art of extracting joy from misery, and of smiling amidst all the terrors of pain, sorrow, poverty, and death? She was silent for a moment, then stepping to her closet, reached a Bible, which she put into my hands: "See there," said she, "the volume in which I have learnt this art. Here I am taught, that everlasting glory is in store for all who will accept it upon the terms which Infinite Perfection has prescribed; here I am promised consolation, assistance, and support from the Lord of Life; and here I am assured, that my transient afflictions are only meant to fit me for eternal and unspeakable happiness. This happiness is at hand. The short remainder of my life seems but a point, beyond which opens the glorious prospect of immortality: thus encouraged, how should I be dejected? Thus supported, how should I sink? With such prospects, such assured hopes, how can I be otherwise than happy?"

While

While she spoke, her eyes sparkled, and her whole face seemed animated with joy. I was struck with her manner, as well as her words. Every syllable she uttered seemed to sink into my soul, so that I never can forget it. I resolved to examine a religion, which was capable of producing such effects as I could not attribute either to chance or error. The good couple pressed me, with so much unaffected kindness, to make their little parsonage my asylum till I could better dispose of myself, that I accepted their offer. Here, with the assistance of the clergyman, who is a plain, sensible, and truly pious man, I have studied the Holy Scriptures, and the evidences of their authority. But after reading them with candour and attention, I found all the intrinsic arguments of their truth superfluous: the excellency of their precepts, the consistency of their doctrines, and the glorious motives and encouragements to virtue which they propose; together with the striking example I had before my eyes of their salutary effects, left me no doubt of their divine authority.

During

During the time of my abode here, I have been witness to the more than heroic, the joyful, the triumphant death of the dear good woman. With as much softness and tenderness as I ever saw in a female character, she shewed more dauntless intrepidity than the sternest philosopher, or the proudest hero. No torment could shake the constancy of her soul, or length of pain wear out the strength of her patience. Death was to her an object not of horror but of hope. When I heard her pour forth her last breath in thanksgiving, and saw the smile of extasy remain on her pale face when life was fled, I could not help crying out in the beautiful language I had lately learnt from the Sacred Writings, "O Death! where is thy sting? O Grave! where is thy victory?"

I am now preparing to leave my excellent benefactor, and get my bread in a service, to which he has recommended me in a neighbouring family. A state of servitude, to which once I could not resolve to yield, appears no longer dreadful to me; that pride, which would have made it galling, Christianity has

has subdued, though philosophy attempted it in vain. As a penitent, I should gratefully submit to mortification; but as a Christian, I find myself superior to every mortification, except the sense of guilt. This has humbled me to the dust : but the assurances that are given me by the Saviour of the world of the divine pardon and favour, upon sincere repentance, have calmed my troubled spirit, and filled my mind with peace and joy, which the world can neither give nor take away. Thus, without any change for the better in my outward circumstances, I find myself changed from a distracted, poor, despairing wretch, to a contented, happy, grateful being; thankful for, and pleased with my present state of existence; yet exulting in the hope of quitting it for endless glory and happiness.

O! Sir, tell the unthinking mortals, who will not take the pains of enquiring into those truths which most concern them, and who are led by fashion, and the pride of human reason, into a contempt for the sacred oracles of God, tell them this truth, which experience hath taught me, that though vice is constantly attended

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tended by misery, virtue itself cannot confer happiness in this world, except it is animated with the hopes of eternal bliss in the world to come.





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